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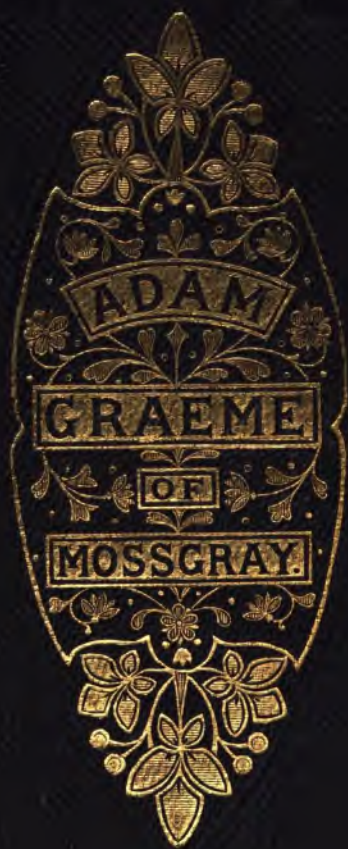
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MEMOIRS AND RESOLUTIONS
OF
ADAM GRAEME
OF MOSSGRAY.

INCLUDING SOME CHRONICLES OF THE BOROUGH OF FENDIE

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"PASSAGES IN THE LIFE OF MRS MARGARET MAITLAND,"
"LILLIESLEAF," "THE DAYS OF MY LIFE," ETC.

"So he bore without abuse
The grand old name of gentleman."—TENNYSON.



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HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
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BOOK I.

THE HISTORY OF ADAM GRAEME.

. To some kind of men
Their graces serve them but as enemies.
. Your virtues, gentle Master,
Are sanctified and holy warriors to you.
As You LIKE It.

ADAM GRAEME OF MOSSGRAY.

CHAPTER I.

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting,
The soul that rises with us, our Life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar ;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.—WORDSWORTH.

THE first thing which I can record concerning myself is, that I was born.

That I was born ! I who now sit in this remote and solitary study, of whose mysteries my good neighbours speak reverently with doubt and wonder, encompassed with things immortal!—the everlasting elements without, the stream, the hills, the fruitful earth, which has been and shall be until the end of time ; within with things of life, instinct and inherent, fated perchance to live longer than this present world, the books of men—the Book of God—that out of darkness and sleep and unconsciousness, I was born !

These are wonderful words. This life, to which neither time nor eternity can bring diminution—this everlasting living soul, *began*. My mind loses itself in these depths. Strangely significant and solemn are the commonest phrases of our humanity ; the words which veil the constant marvels of our miraculous life !

But this of “ he was born ” is greater in my eyes, than that other of “ he died.” Say you, He died ? say rather, He has changed his garments, has put off a fading robe, which by and by—perchance a time as short in Heaven's account

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as are these fleeting days to us—he shall put on again, to wear for ever. But in yonder anxious house, in yonder dim room, with life's plaintive music rising on his unconscious ear, in wailing and tears, its natural utterance, this wonderful soul began. Be solemn in your rejoicing, ye new mothers, ye glad attendant friends; for this that hath come into the world shall abide for ever, this new existence is beyond the breath or touch of death, a thing immortal, a presence which shall outlive the world.

I was born sadly, in gloom which none broke by the voice of thanksgiving, for the two greatest things of human life met in my birth-hour. I entered the world, a fit entrance for my long, clouded course; and solemnly, in pain and grief, my mother went forth to the other country. My young, fair, gentle mother, of whom I think now as of some beautiful dream that crossed me in my youth.

My father was a hard man, who loved the world; but I used to hear long ago that this moved him. Most deeply all my life has it moved me, who never knew the girl who was my mother. She has been a vision hovering about me all my days; saintly and mother-like when I was young, but now, in her pale beauty resembling more a dead child of the old man who is her son.

I dwell upon this perhaps too often, when I am sad—and I am truly sad too often, for I am alone; but it is surely well and blessed to preserve in the safe keeping of death this holy fragrance of youth. The years that have mossed her grave, and made the blood thin and chill in my old veins, have brought no change to her—she is young for ever.

My father was a Graeme of Mossgray. In our own Southland district we are chief of the name; but he did not esteem the traditional honour that belonged to the title—it was mere idle breath to him. The principal part of his life was spent in a distant city. He laboured without ceasing, for I know not what reason. I fancy there had been some ambition in him to accumulate one of those fairy fortunes, which very prosaic and ordinary men do achieve sometimes, though what end he proposed to himself in attaining this, I cannot tell, for he himself was becoming old, and I was nothing to him; even as the heir of his name he bestowed no regard on me; for the name itself was indifferent. He would have thrown it into the scale with any piece of merchandise, and known himself nothing the poorer.

But a spell was upon this fortune of his, so constantly pursued. His prosperity never passed a certain limit. It was as though some malicious spirit had the guiding of his fate in this respect, in vengeance of better blessings unused and slighted. He always began with success and good fortune; the delusive promise lasted long enough to lure him deeper and deeper into the snare, and then the tide began to swell and turn, and on its rising waves his hopes went bitterly out into the blank and cheerless sea. It was a sad fate, and had his objects been worthier, a fate to be deeply sympathised with; but the man was a hard man (I scarcely knew him, though he was my father); and was susceptible to no grief but this. That discipline, wise as it must be, most hard as it is always, which strikes us through our dearest things, could not touch him except in those outward matters of wealth and mercantile credit, which to him were all in all; and on these accordingly the stroke fell.

So heavily it came at last, that in his wilful selfishness he resolved to sell Mossgray. There was no one living to plead for me, a child then, scarcely daring to lift up my eyes in his presence, and for my right to this inheritance, descended from many upright fathers to whom its very name and local place were dearer than fortune. But death stepped in again to save for me a home—a home which has been to me a blessed inheritance, a solace in the midst of some evils—from other some a refuge and a shelter.

I was a solitary child, allowed in this lonely house of Mossgray to grow up, neglected and uncared for, as I best could. My childish memories are rich in dreams and spiritual presences, and overshadowed universally by that vague sadness, which, dumb as it is, and quiet, is so pitiful in children. I remember how the leaves were wont to fall from the old elms and alders by the waterside, with their eerie and plaintive sound. I remember the low sweeping cadence of the water—the disconsolate autumn breeze—and then comes upon me again the blank childish heaviness—the cloud of childish melancholy, that knew not how it was made sad, nor why.

Mossgray had been a peelhouse—one of those fortified places which the exigencies of Border warfare, predatory and otherwise, made so necessary in our district. A high, square tower occupies the centre, with narrow windows, and arrow slits piercing its massy wall, which has been of old strong in

all needful capabilities of defence, and could yet be a notable hold, if our peaceful Cumberland neighbours took up their warlike trade again.

About the tower cling irregular offshoots, added by many Lairds of Mossgray since peace became paramount on the Border; in which, it is impossible to deny, my good ancestors have studied convenience more than elegance. Yet the group of buildings high and low, angled and rounded, with the dark and rugged tower rising in the midst, have a charm upon them, greater, as I think, than the fascination of regular beauty. Patches of moss and yellow lichen are on the walls and roof—the grey, thick walls, and sombre slated roof, which look themselves like some natural growth of the earth, firmly rooted in kindly soil. Our doors are many now, and broad and easy of access—for the successive Graemes, who have increased the accommodations of Mossgray, have added entrance to entrance, with a prodigality by no means pleasant when those searching winds are abroad; but we still preserve the harsh and lowering portal, and the heavy iron door, which of old frowned upon unwelcome southern visitors in sullen defiance.

I confess that I have a pleasure in looking upon these—it pleases me to trace historic changes in the aspect of my patrimonial house; that this belongs of natural right to the rugged and sturdy times of Border warfare—that from that gloomy turret with its spiral stair, the golden shield of Scotland was gloomily taken down by one who had fought in her cause, when Mary crossed the Firth on her last fatal journey to trust the false courtesies of England. That in this dark chamber, a godly Lady Mossgray sheltered the persecuted hinds and shepherds, whose faith has added them to the ranks of our truest chivalry in Scotland. That this enlarged and decorated hall in the basement of the tower bears witness to the peace of the third William's reign. That these gradually accumulating walls carry on the chronicle through the less eventful times of modern history—that here we have been dwelling, through all vicissitudes prosperous and adverse, in our own land and among our own people for five hundred certain years. There remembrances I acknowledge are dear to me. I lose my own individuality when I leave Mossgray.

And in a vague mist of dreamy romance and childish reverie, these histories hung incumbent on my mind when my dim days began. They lived with me, a host of mingled times

and shapes, more real, as I fancy yet, than the common everyday things I saw around. The chill of cold-heartedness, the absence of truth, strike with a strange, blank, unexpressed pain, upon the heart of a child—and from these I turned to dwell, where warriors and Border maidens had dwelt before me, among the true knights and fair ladies of a yearning fancy, whose indefinite pageants and minstrelsies had yet more truth of nature in them than the hollow external forms of the life that men called real.—

“Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realized,”

oppressed me on all sides then—but I had no misgivings as to the beautiful olden times—they were past, and they were true!

At our feet in this Mossgray runs a water, of some importance as we flatter ourselves. Flowing downward placid and calm from the hills, it has attained a considerable breadth and volume before it passes our old walls. And, by what chance I know not, our stream has been kept in its native pride of woodland and green banks safe from encroachments of cultivation. We have glades whose grassy undulations and noble solitary trees, might match with any park in England, and we have thickly-wooded deans, closing in arched foliage over our river, with fretting rocks and waterfalls peculiarly our own. Scattered cot-houses to whom this water is a dear companion—quaint and dewy villages lying under the trees, with glimmerings of softened light about them, from the sky above and the stream below. Mills picturesque in their mossy homeliness throwing the drowsy stir of rural labour across the placid water—these are our friends and neighbours at Mossgray.

Nor do we lack, in our quiet country, inhabitants more distinguished. If I pursue my walk southward for a mile, I come upon a brave stone bridge, spanning with its stately arches the pleasant river; and across the bridge appear the many-coloured roofs of the town of Fendie in their varieties of thatch and slate, and homely red tiles, congregated happily together for mutual friendship and traffic. A very tranquil rural town, along whose streets the sunbeam slants drowsily in summer, with scarce a passing figure to break its brightness; but withal a busy borough, alive with many interests, and esteeming itself in innocent vanity and self-complacence,

very far in advance of the simple "country" over which it sways its little sceptre, in all the arts and luxuries of life.

Withal, our water carries ships, and where it pours itself into the Firth, has wealthy fisheries upon its margin, and beholds long ranks of guileful nets, in which its receding waters help the fishermen to snare the glistening grilse and lordly salmon, born by the hundred in its silent caves. Our vessels are of no great burden, and boast but homely names—"Williams" and "Janets," "Johns" and "Marys"—for our ship-owners name their cherished boats after their still more cherished children; but all of them proudly bear the emblazoned name of Fendie. To all of them the Waterfoot is a delicious haven, fragrant with the breath of home.

The grey walls of Mossgray have at all times been home to me—although a quiet and sad one often, to the man no less than to the solitary child they sheltered long ago. I remember well the pensive childish musings of that time; the dreamy gladness with which I wandered on those bright summer mornings by the pleasant water, my sole friend and playmate then, as it is my best companion now; and that unspeakable loneliness and desolation which came to me on the drooping wing of the plaintive autumn breeze. It is all indefinite and vague now as it was then. The little moralist of ten twelvemonths beginning to think how swiftly those waves of his young life glided by—the meditative, pensive boy looking on while his compeers in years pursued their sports, with his bashful wish to join them, and his sorrowful dreamy thoughts about their unthinking mirth. I recall these as a succession of dim pictures—the history of a beginning life, forlorn as only childhood can be.

CHAPTER II.

Shades of the prison-house begin to close
 Upon the growing boy;
 But he beholds the light and whence it flows—
 He sees it in his joy.

I do not quite agree with Wordsworth.

I grant you that there is much in the earlier childhood, indefinite always and vague as twilight dreams, which proclaims the spiritual and infinite to be nearer to these unconscious dawning souls than it is to us. There is the instinct of wonder, which in its eager whys and wherefores strikes out intuitions of strange wisdom sometimes, concerning those common mysteries about us, with which, in the invulnerable might of their simplicity, philosophers dare not meddle—

“The obstinate questionings
 Of sense and outward things;”

the “visionary gleam” which this new inmate of the world throws about unawares from its own strangely luminous soul. I grant you all these in early childhood, but for your boy!

Your healthful boy is given to no manner of musing. He has begun to come in contact with the materialisms of the world, and battles with them lustily, with right good will and daring joyousness. It does not occur to him to tell you of the beauty of this water, but you shall find him eloquent on the subject of his anglings or swimmings—his feats upon it in boats—his miraculous slides—his inevitable fallings in. The delicate spiritual presence within him has forgotten how, a while ago, it seemed well nigh to touch, in dreamy awe and reverence, those other spiritual presences with which its teeming fancy had peopled the indefinite air everywhere. The warm blood is bounding in his veins in all its first exuberant impulse of life and motion. To construct—to destroy—to fight—to labour—to bend all these material obstructions under the absolute dominion of his strong young human will. To pour forth in boisterous glee, by shout and whoop, by leap and wrestle, by all that is joyous, and wild, and loud enough, the overflowing energy of his youthful powers. Your

true boy does not pause in his manifold undertakings to consider natural joys and sunshine. If you would understand his enjoyment of these, you must see him breast the current as he swims across the river, and swing high up on perilous branches in the wood. His hands are full—let them talk or muse who will—his vocation is other than this.

The boy's hero is the material man—the one single unapproachable Crusoe whom Genius has created for him—the many sailor-men of ruder flesh and blood, militant upon the sea—the hunter of unknown forests—the adventurous traveller of dangerous countries—there are the glorious ideals of the boy. He thirsts to throw the lasso with the fiery sportsman of Mexico, he burns with vain longing to have been one of the olden crew who were shipwrecked with the Byron of the sea. He clenches his hands and sets his teeth in burning indignation, when he reads how the gentle Cook fell in yon southern island far away, and knows by the valiant blood rising hot to his heart, that had he been there it had chanced otherwise. And if he returns to olden times, it is to fight by the side of Wallace, to row the forlorn boat of the Bruce, to do battle on the muirs for the Covenant, to guide Prince Charles through mountain pass and cavern. When he dreams, it is of the world without—the stirring, fighting, opposing world, which is to be quelled, and put down, and tamed into obedience to the young conqueror's will. The sun sheds grateful light upon him, and the moon looks down from her broad skies in vain. If he could fight for her, she might enlist his youthful chivalry, as the Queen of old times, the hapless Mary, like her in lofty beauty, as in disastrous wading through stormy clouds, might have done: but to dream of her—to think of her serene pale smile—alas, no! he has other work in hand.

I remember I was fishing or appearing to fish one bright morning, in a link of our water, which was a kind of hermitage to me,—I might be twelve years old then—when my father suddenly approached me, leading in his hand a boy of my own years—a boy so differently endowed, so superior to myself as I felt at once in my shy consciousness.

My father visited Mossgray seldom: at this time we had received no intimation of his coming, and the timid constraint and awkward diffidence, which were always upon me in his presence, were heightened into exceeding pain by this sudden appearance.

"Adam," said my father, "this is your cousin Charles. He is to stay with you in future at Mossgray."

My father's own name was Charles; he looked with favour on his namesake, as he watched our greeting. I so shy and rustic, and Charlie Graeme so bold and manly—I felt how disadvantageous was the comparison.

But when my father left us, and we became acquainted, as we did soon, for my cousin was as frank as I was shy, then the glorious new life of genuine boyhood which burst upon Mossgray and upon me! How I lavished upon Charlie the unsunned treasures of my solitary child's heart; how I awoke out of my dreamy loneliness, to find myself enriched beyond all wealth in his companionship. How I discovered a new charm and attraction in my own beloved water and noble woods, from the wild shout of mirth with which Charlie plunged into riotous enjoyment of them. How the old walls and doorways that had been disturbed by few sounds louder than my pensive stealings out and in, resounded now with the ringing speed of boyish footsteps, and the blythe din of boyish laughter. It is pleasant to look back upon that time, when from a childish hermit I became a boy!

There was for me after that era no more solitary watching of the sports of others. The "haill water" ere long knew Charlie Graeme as the adventurous leader of every troop of juvenile mischief-makers, and I was by no means a slow or backward pupil. The complete revolution in my life which this produced gave these vigorous enjoyments a still greater zest to me, albeit I sometimes felt the pleasure of compassionate benevolence towards these strong fellows, my seniors in years, whose unthinking mirth of mood was so much younger than mine. I liked the sports for their sake, and they gave me some casual place in their regard for sake of the games in which I shared—we were different so far—but the lingerings of my reclusive spirit did by no means operate disadvantageously upon my physical activities. I had emerged into a new existence. I had entered the second stage of life.

Charlie was the son of my father's only brother. I had never seen, and scarcely ever heard of, my uncle; but at his death, which took place a short time before his son's arrival at Mossgray, Charlie, with the very slender inheritance that remained to him, had been committed to my father's care, as his only near relative and guardian. To keep us together at Mossgray was the cheapest and easiest way of getting rid of

us, and accordingly we were despatched together to the academy of Fendie.

A somewhat famous school in our district, which in its day has sent forth men into the world—men of stature and nobleness, some few, albeit it has filled up its quota with perhaps a greater than usual commodity of packmen; but a school of high standing and character withal, to which the neighbouring gentry, and the smaller fry of “genteel families” in Fendie, could send their sons without derogation. We made the usual progress, as I fancy, in those routine affairs which were called our studies. We learnt lessons with as much painstaking industry as we could summon up in the morning, and forgot them with the most praiseworthy ease at night. We were conscientious enough to play truant seldom—we had no more than our average of accidents. Charlie only twice fell into the water, and only once broke his arm. My nautical mischances had all some connection with the mill-lead at the Dean, my favourite nook. On the whole we got through admirably. Never boys on the Border were blyther than we.

Young Fendie of the mount was at an English boarding-school. Our sturdy home academy was not good enough for the young laird of that ilk. What storms of ridicule we poured upon him—he knapped English, he had a holy horror of torn breeks, he never climbed a tree in his life; and, crowning shame of all, it was whispered among us in the utmost scorn and derision, that his dainty cambric handkerchief was perfumed like a lady’s! We looked at the indefinite looking things in our own miscellaneous pockets, and echoed it with a storm of laughter. “He has scent on his napkin!” It was the very climax of derision: we could go no further.

Hew Murray, of Murrayshaugh, was our warmest friend. We met sometimes, when out-of-door amusements were impracticable, in the vaulted room in Mossgray Tower, where lay in state various remnants of ancestral mail, and which we called the armoury—to compare notes as to the changes which must have happened in the fortunes of Scotland, had we three chanced to fight at Falkirk with Wallace, or with James at Flodden. But whereas Hew Murray and I were chivalrously engrossed with considerations of what we could have done for Scotland, it always happened, as I recollect, that Charlie rose in glorious anticipation of knighthoods and earldoms and broad lands to be won by his sword and by his bow. Inno-

cent chevaliers errant were we, not without a weakness for beautiful disconsolate princesses, and imprisoned ladies to be set free by our valour and fidelity, but the dazzling chances of war had greater fascination for Charlie. *Our* hero contented himself with freeing the lady, and reducing the castle—*his*, took possession of the conquered stronghold and reigned in the stead of his enemy.

But our friends were not all of our own degree. A mile or two on the other side of Fendie lay a pretty house, which made up in its snug and comfortable proportions for its entire want of all the antiquities which clustered in hoary grace about Mossgray. Pertaining to it was a small farm, which sufficed to give its proprietor the much-esteemed territorial designation. The name of the place was Greenshaw, its owner's Johnstone. People said that he had driven a homely enough trade in former days; but never man on the northern side of Skiddaw had seen any vestige of the pack on the broad shoulders of Mr Johnstone of Greenshaw. Besides, we do rather hold the "wanderer's" trade in good repute in our country, so the rumour did the comfortable man no harm.

His son Walter was one of our sworn brethren. Walter Johnstone surpassed us all in daring; but the greatest heat of boyish excitement could scarcely bring any additional glow to his cheek, or throw the slightest tremor into his hand. Walter could calculate his time to a moment; he was never late, he was never hurried. Prompt and bold, cool and acute, he was the regulator and time-keeper of our obstreperous band.

Then there was Edward Maxwell, the widow's son at the Watch-brae. He was the detrimental of our joyous parties. He always became weary at unseasonable times; he continually shirked his share of the work, and evaded the perilous parts of our excursions; but he had good looks in his favour, and a winning, ingratiating, caressing manner, which overcame our reproaches. It always happened, too, that Maxwell's weakness brought him prominently forward among us. Speculations as to what he would do next, when he would fail in a fatigue, how he would glide out of a danger, with what new expedients he would excuse himself, kept our conversation full of him, and he felt the distinction, such as it was.

Other companions we had, greater and smaller as it chanced, for we were perfectly republican. Many kindly ties

I have from that school-time with men of all classes, in all places and quarters of the earth: Australian settlers in the bush, merchants in London and Liverpool, distinguished men of literature, poor subalterns in India, humble shopkeepers in Fendie, small farmer-lairds in my own county; these pleasant threads of old connection are spun out far and near. I like it—there is a kindly universality of brotherhood in this, that seems to me as much better, as it is wider and further reaching than any mere friendships of one especial class, isolated, and standing upon the bare platform of their position.

CHAPTER III.

The youth who daily further from the East
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended.

YES! it is in youth, properly so called, that the true age of poetry is.

The priesthood of nature, the mood that can hold communion with her in her every place and time—these come only when the boy's material age is past, and the childish dreams come back, mightier now and clearer, to clothe with their rare grace the expanding, growing soul. Is it well that this radiance should by and by fade into the light of common day? let us be content—the old man is of kin to the youth—perchance if the harsher meridian time did not intervene, it would scarcely be so.

But now the vision splendid travels with him everywhere. There is a glory about the hills and on the sky; there is music, all the more dear that it is inarticulate, in every running stream; there is, highest of all, a wonderful light of truth, and love, and nobleness, over all human things. Motives grand and sublime, labour generous and great, worthy of the marvellous position held by this mortal race. The whole universe vibrates to his ear, with heroic marches and noble chimes of music, to which his soul thrills, and his step keeps time. True indeed there are falsehood and selfishness and

change here, or whence these tales of sorrow, and this generous indignation that swells within him, against the wrong which is to be conquered ; but these are not near him. In his own especial atmosphere there is perfect truth open at all points to the eye of day. His ideal covers and veils all meaner faults in the objects of his chivalrous affection ; and he pities men who are smarting under neglect or inconsistency, or worldliness of friends, as those pity who feel their own blessedness made all the greater by the contrast.

Before I had reached this stage, my father had been for some time dead. Mr Murray of Murrayshaugh, the father of our friend Hew, a surly old gentleman of very ancient family, and very meagre estate, was my guardian ; and we boys, having fairly concluded our academy course, began to form plans for our future life, not without much magniloquence of speech. Maxwell wavered long between the two grave professions of medicine and the Church. The latter was at first decidedly the favourite, for Johnstone, with malicious glee, drew so exquisite a picture of an adoring congregation, and ministering angels, in the form of ladies, old and young, that the gentle Edward was overpowered with modest delight. But the Widow Maxwell in her cottage, on the Watch-brae, had no manner of influence in the Church, while she had the shadow of a promise from some patron of her husband's to procure for Edward a situation like his father's, that of an assistant army surgeon. So Maxwell's fate was determined. He was immediately to commence his studies as a medical student.

Johnstone at once and promptly decided for the law, in some one of its occult branches, I scarcely recollect which ; but he had not the gift of utterance, and therefore was disqualified from entering the highest and most showy class of the profession.

Charlie's destination was less easily fixed. He was eager to grow rich—he aspired to be famous—he liked all the good things of this world so well, that he was undecided which to grasp at. He thought of India, and his eyes sparkled ; but some indefinite feeling, which was not home-love, made him determine to remain in Scotland. I used to wonder at this ; for Charlie, with his frank fascination of manners, and his adventurous spirit, was the very man to travel—the very man, as I fancied in honest boyish admiration, to succeed brilliantly wherever he went ; but he resolved to remain at home. Then

he thought of business—of becoming a great merchant—for youthful calculators have a happy knack of leaping over all the initiatory steps—but for that the capital was wanting. He had nothing—I not very much, and while I would joyfully have shared my utmost farthing with Charlie, that gruff old Murrayshaugh growled forth his veto—“There’s enough tint with merchandise for one generation of ye!” so we relinquished that.

But the gift that Johnstone wanted, Charlie had in perfection. He was a natural orator; and the momentous decision was made at last. Charlie decided upon being a great lawyer—the most brilliant pleader in Scotland—perhaps Lord Advocate eventually—certainly a Member of Parliament—Member for Edinburgh! Charlie rose from his low carved chair by the fire as that crowning glory burst upon him—the grandeur of it was overpowering—Member for Edinburgh!

Murrayshaugh was an impoverished and poor estate. Its possessor had been “wild” in his youth, and now resented and avenged upon his children the poverty himself had made. Lucy Murray grew up in forlorn and lonely seclusion, acquainted from her youth with many cares. Hew was designed for a civil appointment in India, where his father ordained his industry should redeem the fortunes of the family. The harsh old man was a despot—there was no appeal against his arbitrary will.

But Murrayshaugh withal was a gentleman and a scholar; as anxious that his son should be fully and carefully fitted for the position he was to occupy as determined that in this way, and no other, should Hew’s life be spent. So Hew also was to join our little band of students in Edinburgh, and to have the advantage of two or three sessions’ training there, before he departed to his far-away labour. I could not part with them—Charlie and Hew especially were my sworn brethren; and after a long siege Murrayshaugh yielded to my very reasonable wish of accompanying them, and gave to Charlie and myself the necessary funds, commenting bitterly,—

“Your father, Adam, gave me no charge of furnishing two lads for the college. An it be your silly pleasure to spend your means on your cousin, the way is to deny yourself, my man—not to think you are a pink of generosity when it costs you nothing. But take it—take it—I wish ye much grati-

tude. If ye get but the common share, ye will be well repaid."

"Never mind my father, Adam," said Lucy, as I emerged indignantly from the dreary library of Murrayshaugh into the luxuriant garden, with its mossy terraces sloping to the river-side. "Simon says true, his bark is worse than his bite—and I think, though he would not say it, that he is sad about you all going away, and only looks angry because he thinks shame."

"Are we to go, Adam?" said Charlie, eagerly. He had come to Murrayshaugh with me, and had waited on the terrace with Hew and Lucy while I bearded the lion within.

"Yes," said I, with some heat—for there is nothing that one resents so warmly in one's first youth as any prophecy of ingratitude on the part of those whom we delight to honour. "Yes, we're to go. I would like to know why old people continually think young ones fools."

I was nearly eighteen—I drew myself up.

"Perhaps because they are often, Adam," suggested Lucy gently.

I could not be angry at Lucy Murray. I was too full of boyish chivalry, having reëntered the age of imagination, to be anything but gentle and deferential to a girl.

"How you do speak," exclaimed my cousin, "you think us fools, do you, Lucy?—very well—you'll see that by and by."

"When you read the honourable Member for Edinburgh's great speech," said Hew, with his frank and pleasant laugh, "about—what will it be about, Charlie?"

"And I would like to know," continued Charlie, angrily, "what we have done that we should be thought so very foolish. We have only been at home all our lives, no doubt—people get so much more culture in Yorkshire!"

Lucy turned away.

"Never heed him, Lucy," said Hew, "he shows the cloven foot. It's all about poor Dick Fendie. Why, man, Charlie, to be jealous of him!"

Charlie was past eighteen. He had some time since thrown his handkerchief on Lucy Murray, and regularly engrossed her society; by no means to her own satisfaction at first, but she had become accustomed to it. He had wounded her feelings now. He saw it himself, and was maliciously pleased. I saw it as she wandered along the terrace towards

the water-side, and could almost have thrown him over the wall in spite of our brotherhood.

"What is the matter?" said I. "Quarrel with Hew or me as you like, Charlie, but what has Lucy done?"

Charlie twisted the graceful curl by the side of his cap, and swung round on his heel to follow Lucy without answering me. He was very handsome, and had a frank manliness in every look and gesture which disarmed one's reproofs. At present, too, the conscious smile of power was on his face—he felt himself so sure of immediate forgiveness—so perfectly able to restore the smiles of Lucy Murray.

Hew and I stood watching him, as he went along the terrace after her. Our eyes met—we exclaimed in chorus, "He does not mean anything—Charlie would not hurt any one's feelings for the world."

"It was Lucy's own fault, talking so much of Dick Fendie," said Hew. "Mamma's good boy has come home, Adam—have you seen him yet? And Lucy would defend him; but I suppose it's all over now. By the by, Adam, how does it come about that you and I never quarrel with Lucy?"

"You and I—why, is she not your sister, Hew? and almost mine, too—Charlie you know—Charlie is different."

Hew became thoughtful for a moment, and ended with a laugh. "Ay, that's because Mrs Mense at Mossgray says they were made for each other. But I say, Adam, do Lillie Johnstone and you battle at each other like these two?"

I blushed a tremulous blush—it was desecration to name this sacred name so lightly. The two things were altogether different—how or wherefore I did not stay to analyse—but my reverent boyish adoration, and Charlie's bold demands upon the constant patience and sole regard of Lucy Murray, had no resemblance to each other. I shrank back—I would have had Lillie Johnstone distinguished by the reverent respect of all men, and to hear her name thus profanely conjoined with mine!

"Are you nearly ready, Hew?" I asked hastily, "and when are we to start?"

The starting time was decided on that night, and shortly after we set out, the whole rejoicing band of us, upon a bracing frosty morning, late in October, on the top of the coach for Edinburgh. Maxwell managed to get up a few tears for his mother's especial benefit. I had nearly joined him myself, I recollect, when I saw her pale anxious face

lifted up so tenderly to the high perch where we were crowded together. Never human face had worn that look for me, and my heart warmed the more to the son of this sad mother, even while I almost envied him.

All the rest of us were motherless; but even the gruff "Good-bye, boys," of Murrayshaugh had some feeling in it this morning; and Lucy Murray's eyes were too heavy to be raised to us, as she stood by her father's side. Then there was a small white hand waving a handkerchief from within the high holly hedge of Greenshaw as we passed. It perhaps was not all for her brother. I appropriated, with trembling, some share of the farewell.

In a very short time we had settled down to our respective studies. It is comparatively unusual in Scotland to give youths the benefit of college education except for some special profession; so that, put the learned faculties aside, and you leave but a small residuum to represent what forms the larger proportion of students in England. It is perhaps for this reason that we are more practical than our neighbours; that those niceties of profound classical learning which form the glory on the head of English universities—those painful researches into the nature of the Greek verb, and folio disputations on contested words, do scarcely exist among us. But that by the way. We were very frank, very unsophisticated, very innocent, we Fendie lads; and even, as I fancy, very little less so when we left than when we entered Edinburgh. It has its abundant temptations, no doubt, as all other towns have, but, so far as I myself saw, we came through them with tolerable safety. Faults of mind, and temper, and spirit, we had many, but I think we, in a great degree, escaped that round of petty vices, the assumed manliness of which leads so many foolish lads astray.

CHAPTER IV.

I walk as ere I walked forlorn
When all our path was fresh with dew
And all the bugle breezes blew
Reveillée to the breaking morn.—IN MEMORIAM.

I AM looking out from the deep window of my study, through the sharp air of a frosty, clear November night. There are lights gleaming in some cottage windows, so far down under the bare trees by the water-side, that you would think them glow-worms on the grass; and silvery mists are floating about the sky, and yonder lie some great distant mountain clouds, with stars embayed in creeks and inlets at their feet, like lights of anchored ships.

The face of the beautiful night before me brings back another time. I fancy I am leaning again over the grey wall, which bounds the sloping road on yonder Calton, looking down with rapt and dreamy eyes upon that wonderful scene below. Hew Murray's arm is in mine; we have the visionary reverence of youth upon us, and when we speak, we speak low, and with few words. Yonder noble hill with its proud crest, and its visible darkness—yonder faint towers, far below, of storied Holyrood—that grand rugged line from the dim valley of the palace to the bluff front of the castle, with its graceful hovering crown of St Giles lying so fitly upon the stately head of our royal city—the gleaming lights, halfway between the dim sky and the dimmer earth—the confused hum ascending up in softened dreamy murmurs. So near the life and din of a great city; so near the wonderful gloom and silence of the everlasting hills. There is a jarring sound below. I start and open my eyes—and I am looking forth upon the placid water of Fendie, the low cottage lights below, and the steady stars above—an old man and alone!

After our third session together at college, Hew Murray went to his distant destination. Murrayshaugh himself came to Edinburgh to superintend his son's outfit, and to my very great grief, and the regret of the whole band of us, slightly mingled with envy, Hew set sail in a Leith smack—

we had no steamers in those days—for London, from whence he was to proceed to Portsmouth, where his ship lay.

Hew was not of the cosmopolitan class ; he was one of those—happily still existing, and I hope increasing in these days—whom the very name of home and country stirred like a trumpet. After the greatest motive of all—and I fear that in our youthful time *that* had but little comparative weight with us, as it had little place in the teachings of those who had the guiding of our unformed minds—the honour of his name and of his native land roused the warm spirit of my dear friend, Hew, as no other causes could. “For poor auld Scotland’s sake”—in some degree we all shared the intense and loving loyalty which took this as its centre, but it was a ruling principle with Hew Murray ; and he felt his banishment most painfully, though he submitted to the necessity like a man—for Hew had not any very brilliant hopes.

“There is little chance that I will be able to return till I am old, Adam,” he said to me, sadly, as we lingered on our favourite walk for the last time, looking down on the Old Town through the balmy dim spring night ; “and if I should come home as rich as old Major Wardlaw of the Elms, what then ? One would scarcely like to look forward to such an end of one’s labours. His gouty chair, and his hot unwholesome room, and his solitude, and his grumbling, and his spiceries, and his inflammable temper. Man, Adam ! to think that I must leave home, and part with Lucy and with all of you, and toil through my whole life where I shall never hear a Scotch tongue, for such an end as that !”

“You will hear many Scotch tongues in Bombay, Hew,” said I, “and then you are sure to marry somebody’s daughter, and come home immediately.”

Hew’s frank happy laugh rang into the dim air pleasantly ; its sound always cheered me, but the remembrance that I might not hear it again for years fell upon me in blank pain. We made a great many hysterical attempts after that to be merry, but failed so woefully in every case, that we turned at last in silence round the brow of the hill, and looked out upon the sea : the noble Firth spreading its silvery lengths far away in the distance, with its dark islands and steady lights, and the broad line of its princely highway leading forth into the foreign world !

The cold, strange, alien world where home was not, nor

friends. Hew Murray's hand grasped my arm for a moment with a convulsive pressure, and there were tears under our eyelids,—tears which we were not ashamed to shed under cover of the gentle night.

The next day I watched a white sail gliding smoothly over the peaceful Firth, until I lost it on the horizon far away—and my dearest friend was gone.

For Charlie Graeme, brother-like as we were, was less closely joined to me than Hew. It is a vulgar notion that the warmest friendship requires a contrast of minds. Charlie and I had very distinct individualizations. Hew resembled me closely—I had almost said, that in matters of the mind and heart Hew Murray and I had all things common. In things physical there was the same connection between my cousin and myself; but heartily as I liked Charlie, there were many points on which I certainly knew that we could by no possibility agree; there were many matters of feeling and thought which I shrank from bringing under his keen glance—that glance which pierced through my bashful sentimentalities with so little pity.

Maxwell got on delicately with those medical studies of his. He was a great favourite everywhere, his weakness, as usual, bringing him in for much more than his average share of consideration. Charlie and Walter toiled manfully at the dry initiatory necessities of their profession. They were "clever lads" of good parts and promise, both, and both too well endowed with stout common sense and the natural self-interest and ambition, to be, except in rare outbursts, loiterers or idlers. For my desultory self, I dabbled in all scientific crafts; was a metaphysician for one fit, and a chemist for another, and an antiquarian for a third; I dipped into Charlie's dreary quartos, and lingered at the threshold of the dissecting-room with Edward, and for my own hand got through heaps of reading, systematic and unsystematic, not always drawn from the venerable shelves of the college library. It formed a pile of strange rubbish altogether, built up as it was with the crude philosophies peculiar to my years.

But sauntering along the Calton Hill now, alone, to dream over the Old Town, in its antique grace and beauty, made me sick at heart. Hew Murray was one of those rare friends whom one does not need to be continually talking to. A stranger who observed our few words might have taken us for very indifferent companions, but this was above

all, the sign of our closest brotherhood. When Charlie was with us, we were talkative enough, for then a foreign element was introduced, but we were too much one when we were alone to have any such constraint upon us. And when from these silent walks we emerged into the bustle and light of the street below, and throwing off the charm, began to be as loud as our neighbours, we felt, both of us, that the chain of our regard was drawn closer by these communings. Never friend in this world did I appropriate and feel mine so entirely as Hew, and the dim hill-side where my silence was unshared, where there was none to dream beside me as I dreamt, or to feel as I felt, became painful to my solitary eyes. I did not return to Edinburgh after Hew went away. It had lost its charm for me. I remained alone at Mossgray.

I was then a man. I had nearly reached my majority, and having perhaps exaggerated notions of what became my place and position in respect to the tenants and cottages around me, I began to bestir myself to ascertain how I could do some work in this brief district, allotted to me by Providence. I have always been inclined to the contemplative, but I am not idle, and with all the proud hopes and ambitions of youth to buoy me up, I laboured and deliberated "for the good of the people," with much enjoyment of the philanthropy.

Lucy Murray had grown into a young woman ; graceful and grave, with lines of thought upon her forehead, printed perhaps too deeply for one so young. That slender ring upon her finger was Charlie's gift, and contains in its small enclosure one of those circlets of his sunny hair, which cling so lovingly about his temples and become them so well ; for their engagement is a grave matter now, acknowledged and known. And yet I fancy them scarcely like each other yet, for Lucy has dwelt long with her own thoughts silently, and in solitude, and Charlie, with his whole soul, has embarked on the busy sea of life ; but the contrast gives them singular grace when they are together, and Lucy is more than ever a sister to me.

The bright face at Greenshaw, which, with all its happy changes, has been the angel of my boyish dreams for years, is brighter now in the grace of early womanhood than ever before. I fancy her the inmate of some pure and holy atmosphere, the star of some loftier sky. I forget when I am near Greenshaw that there is sin in the world—I be-

come heterodox in my very faith—for evil has no share in Liliās.

The name echoes in my ear with a ring of silvery music. The beautiful and pure of all ages shed their glory about her, and claim my devouter homage. The Rachel of yonder plains of Syria, the Mary, blessed among women, the Una, the Desdemona of our own land. Their shadow is upon her in all places; the very neighbours, common-place as they are, speak low, I fancy, when they speak of "Lillie," and I forgive them the familiarity for the sake of the gracious name; for the stately flower in its royal purity symbolizes my ideal well, and my garden at Mossgray grows white with snowy lilies, and I wander among them dreamily, in a mist of indefinite hopes, and fancied future gladnesses, too bright to tell.

The beautiful time! when every foundation stood fast, and all that was, was true and constant, and of kin to the pure heavens.

Yet Liliās was only the daughter of Mr Johnstone of Greenshaw, who had little honour or standing beyond the bounds of Fendie. Murrayshaugh would have growled the utmost thunder of his anathema upon Lucy, had he known that in her sisterly kindness she had accompanied me to the comfortable plebeian parlour where shone my star, and electrified good Mr Johnstone into hopes of future friendships with those adjacent landed families, who had not hitherto condescended to notice him. But Liliās was shy of Lucy, and seemed, to my chagrin, indifferent to her visit; so I had to console myself with a transitory belief that Liliās felt proudly the injustice of those artificial barriers of society, and was sensible of wrong done to her native dignity by the false rule which made the Laird's daughter of Murrayshaugh a greater person than she, and by Lucy's quiet smile and gentle word of consolation. "By and by, Adam—we will be better friends, by and by."

Yes—there was no landed family of them all which could boast a line so long and so unbroken as that of Mossgray. The encumbrances on the estate had gradually melted away during my frugal minority. I was able to maintain appropriately the position I had inherited. Only this one external matter of rank did Liliās want, and I had it, to lay it at her feet—the name itself acquired new honour and dignity, when my heart beat to anticipate the advent of a

new lady of Mossgray, who should eclipse all who went before.

I greatly affected Mr Johnstone's company then. He was a shrewd man, if not a refined one; and albeit he did not possess that fearful command of words which strikes one with utter panic when one comes to the beginning of a speech of his fellow-craftsman the "Wanderer" of Wordsworth, he yet could manage to keep up a conversation tolerably well, by help of an occasional monosyllable from the other interlocutor—we became great friends. He gave me counsel about the management of my lands; he told me that Matthew Irving of Friarsford, whose tack was nearly out, had been holding his farm for some years past nearly rent free, so greatly had the land increased in value, since his father got the lease. He talked to me of foreign wars and home politics—I listened in happy unconsciousness, feeling only that I was conciliating the goodwill of the father of Lillas, and advancing slowly to my aim.

Mr Johnstone was too shrewd a man not to perceive by and by what brought me so often, bashful and absorbed, into that corner of his parlour. The good man evidently believed at first that I sought the benefit and enlightenment of his conversation; but through a flood of random answers, and unhappy lack of comprehension on my part, of arguments which I never heard, his eyes were opened. He was by no means displeased, I fancied. I was "Mossgray" already, my income was good, my prospects better. I was altogether eligible for a son-in-law.

And by and by, I thought I discovered that the Fendie young ladies, who bore Lillas company sometimes, looked at her with wicked secret laughs and whisperings when I entered the room. Could Lillas *guess* herself? Alas, I could not tell! I was too self-conscious to be at ease with her, and she had always been shy to me.

And matters remained in this uncertain state for a considerable time. I became of age. Murrayshaugh gruffly resigned, as he had gruffly undertaken, the guardianship of myself and my possessions. His house grew more and more desolate as I fancied, and Lucy paler and more thoughtful every day. She was quite alone, and we used to walk together sometimes on the old terrace in silent sympathy, thinking of Hew. He had reached his destination safely, and entered with cheerfulness (as he told us) into the duties of his office;

but the loss of him cast a sad shadow over the house of his fathers. Perhaps it might be only that—perhaps there was something more; but a sadder decay seemed to be gathering over it every time I visited Murrayshaugh.

CHAPTER V.

I leaned my back unto an aik,
I thought it was a trusty tree;
But first it bowed, and syne it brake,
And sae did my true love to me.—OLD SONG.

OUR three students, Charlie, Walter, and Edward, at length completed their studies, and entered upon the duties of their respective professions. Charlie got his first brief from an old friend of the family, and there actually was a report of his speech on the case, by no means an important one, but greatly interesting and very momentous to us, in one of the Edinburgh papers. It was something about a quarry, I think, though what about it, I cannot very well remember. I hurried up to Murrayshaugh with the paper. It was a bright day of early summer, and Charlie himself was to be with us in a week; a visit to which we had long looked forward, and of which Lucy and I had more than once spoken.

I found Lucy in her own little parlour, at the low window which opened to the terrace. The willows were sweeping their long branches over the sighing water, and in spite of the May sunshine over all, and the universal joy without, there was a look of sadness here. I involuntarily restrained my quick step as I reached the window, and Lucy looked up from her habitual work with her usual kindly and gentle smile.

“Look here, Lucy! I have brought you news,” said I, “news worth seeing. Come, don’t read them in a dull room this May-day. Come out into the sunshine and read them here.”

Lucy rose eagerly.

“What is it? is it about Hew, Adam, or—” She paused,

a wavering painful colour came upon her cheek, and her fingers played nervously with the work she had laid down.

"Lucy, you do not think I could bring you anything but good news to-day. Come out and read Charlie's first speech. His pleadings on his first brief, you know—you heard all about that."

I fancied I saw a slight shiver of her frame. She had not heard it! but in a moment after Lucy stepped out upon the terrace and took the paper and read. I thought her figure seemed taller and more distinct against the shadowy background of willows, as she stood there before me with the paper in her hand. There was something in it of firm pride and endurance which struck me as new—some greater emotion than I had ever known.

"Did Charlie send you this, Adam?" she asked, as she gave it back to me.

"Yes, Lucy," said I humbly, feeling myself guilty of giving her great pain when I had expected to bring her pleasure; "it came last night."

There was a slight, almost imperceptible shiver again, and a wandering of the fingers towards each other, as though they would fain be clasped together in the instinctive gesture of grief.

"Wait for me a moment, Adam," said Lucy; "I have something to say to you."

I waited upon the terrace while she went in. What could this portend? I believed, and so did all the countryside, that their marriage was delayed only until Charlie had a prospect of success in his profession. He had told me so himself; it was an understood thing; yet Lucy had not been told of his first brief.

She joined me almost immediately, having only gone in, as it appeared, to throw the light plaid she usually wore, over her shoulders and head, and I waited in anxious silence for her first words.

We had reached the water-side, and paused there together, the long willow-boughs sweeping over us sadly, before she spoke,—

"Adam," she said then, "have you had any conversation with my father lately? Has he ever spoken to you about—about his own affairs?"

"No, Lucy," said I.

"Adam, I may speak to you," said Lucy. "There is some

new calamity hanging over us. I have seen my father receive letters of late—letters that I could perceive were from lawyers—which have brought to his face that white look of despair which you never saw. I mentioned Walter Johnstone's name to him once—when you told us he had gone into partnership with some one in Edinburgh—because he was Hew's companion, and—and yours—and my father broke out into a curse upon him, immediately adding, however,—‘Not him—why should I swear at a packman's son? but my own miserable fortune, that am doomed to be tortured to death by these hired hounds of lawyers!’ I dared ask nothing then, but I have been ready to catch at every word since; and my father has vaguely intimated to me some intention that we should go to France—at least,” said Lucy, hastily, with an indignant blush burning on her face, and a painful heaving of her breast, “that he would go—and, of course, I will not leave him.”

“But the cause, Lucy?” said I. “He can have no cause.”

“Alas, Adam, I cannot tell!” said Lucy, sadly, “for he never has taken me into his confidence; but I think it must be some responsibility—some—Adam, I do not need to hesitate—you know well that we have always been poor.”

I did not know how to answer her; I leaned upon the old mossy wall by Lucy's side, eager to speak of herself—of Charlie, and yet afraid.

“Is there anything that I can do!” I said. “You can trust me, Lucy; is there anything that I can do?”

“No, no, Adam! I do not mean that; no one must interfere with my father or his purposes, you know; but I only desired to tell you that you might understand as much as I do of why we went, if we do go away, and—I only wished to tell you, Adam.”

Lucy turned her head away; one or two tears, so large that one could see by what bitter force they had been restrained, fell softly on the moss of the wall, but she thought I did not see them.

“Lucy, Lucy, this must not be!” said I; “tell me what I can do; I will venture anything rather than that this should come upon us! If Hew were only here—if you would but plead for me, Lucy, that your father may remember that what I have is yours—yours with my whole heart.”

I saw her shake and tremble in the strong effort to restrain herself, but it would not do. She pressed her hand across her eyes, and again the tears fell singly upon the moss

—a few large bitter tears, as if they had been gathered long—an essence of intense pain too powerful to spend itself in much weeping—deliberate drops wrung from her very heart.

“I thank you, Adam,” she said at last, “and yet I do not need to say, I thank you—you know that—but this cannot be; you must do nothing; none of us can do anything except submit. It was only a selfish desire to pain you, I am afraid, which made me tell you this; for it will indeed be very hard to leave Murrayshaugh!”

I could say nothing in return. Alas! there are harder trials than even bidding farewell to one’s home. All was not well in this beautiful world; there were other things among us than those I had dreamed of, and my heart sickened as I tried to reassure myself.

By and by, Lucy turned along a quiet sheltered way, close by the water-side, and I went with her—perhaps I should have left her there, but I followed in spite of myself. We began to speak of Hew.

“Do you think we shall ever meet all together again, Adam?” said Lucy.

“Surely—I hope so,” said I, hastily. “We are all young, Lucy; we may be changed externally perhaps, but that will be all.”

“If we are ever together again, we shall be changed in every way, Adam.”

“Nay, nay, Lucy,” said I, “I cannot let you take up that gloomy notion. Why should we change? We know each other far too well to alter our old likings. We will be the same, Lucy, when we are grey-headed.”

“Will *you*, Adam?—will all of us?—or are we indeed what we think we are?—are we not clothing ourselves and others with some ideal of our own, which hides the natural spirit from us?”

“Lucy!”

“Suppose one had done that,” said Lucy, hurriedly, turning her head away, and speaking more, as I thought, to herself than to me. “Suppose one had clothed another in an ideal so beautiful, so noble, that one almost trembled at one’s own wondrous gladness beholding it; and suppose that suddenly a blast came, and rent the glorious tissue here and there, and revealed a hidden thing of clay below; and one came to know that this noble spirit had never *been* at all, save in the fancy that created it. I dreamt of such a thing the

other night; and dreams come true sometimes. Adam, we all change—not one, but all of us.”

I could not speak then, nor did I try to answer her. What could I say? it was the first check put upon my joyous confidence in all whom I called friends.

“Has your father told Hew, Lucy, that he thinks of leaving Murrayshaugh?” I inquired at last, eager to change the subject.

“I think not. I hope it is only *possible*, Adam; I know nothing more than that; my father does not trust me; but we must know soon.”

I left Murrayshaugh sadly that day. When I had nearly reached Mossgray, I met Lilius with some of her companions, driving her father's little four-wheeled equipage. They paused a moment to receive my eager bashful salutations, and then drove on. The sunshine of that young face dispersed the cloud of doubt and unhappiness that hung about me; for anything false, anything sad, could not come near Lilius—

“I trow that countenance cannot lie
Whose thoughts are legible in the eie,”

I said to myself joyously as I went on. I repented me of my suspicions of Charlie. Lucy must be mistaken. His conduct could be explained. The bright mist fell again over the world, and I forgot my fears and anxieties; they all fled before the smile of Lilius.

I did not see Lucy Murray again before Charlie himself arrived. He reached Mossgray on the afternoon of another brilliant May-day. He was very full of his prospects, and considerably elated with the successful beginning. He even told me the particulars of this first case, I recollect, in natural excitement and exultation, and very humdrum as they were, they interested me too, for his sake.

He had been nearly an hour in the house. Mrs Mense, the housekeeper, was preparing a magnificent dinner in honour of Mr Charlie, the great advocate; and there he sat, lounging half out of the open window, talking himself out of breath. I am nervous when I have any cause of anxiety. I began to change my position, to walk about the room, to take up and throw down everything within my reach. Charlie made no sign—he lounged and talked and laughed; he discussed the things which he *would* do, and which I *should*. I could bear it no longer.

"Charlie," said I, "you intend to go to Murrayshaugh I suppose before dinner. You should set out at once, and make haste, for Mrs Mense will not forgive you if you spoil her trout to-day."

"Trout!" said Charlie, "are we to have trout to-day? Mrs Mense is a sensible woman, Adam. I would not endanger Fendie trout for the world."

"You are illogical, Charlie," said I, "you forget that the governing clause in my sentence concerned Murrayshaugh, and not the fish."

"Pooh—Murrayshaugh's a bore," said Charlie, hastily. "Do you angle yet, Adam, yourself? you lucky fellow, who have nothing to do, and can choose your own solacements!"

"But, Charlie," said I, anxiously; "of course you intend to go some time this evening. I will undertake to make your peace with Nancy. There now, away with you, like a good fellow."

"It's ill talking between a fou man and a fasting," said Charlie, with a forced laugh. "Come, Adam, let's have dinner first—you forget my journey."

He went off to his own room immediately, and I could say no more. I trembled for him. I feared to see the glorious tissue rent, as Lucy Murray said, and some other alien spirit appear below, which was not my friend and brother—which was not the true and generous Charlie Graeme.

We dined alone, and there was a certain constraint upon our conversation. Charlie, it is true, still spoke much, but he seemed, as I fancied, to speak against time. How he lingered at table—how he spun out his stories, and deliberated over every little change, and laboured to fasten arguments upon me, as though endeavouring to shut my eyes to the progress of those slowly darkening hours. I bore it as long as I could, and I bore it in intense pain—I had never known so great a trial.

"Charlie," said I at last, "how we waste our time here. Come, I will walk up with you to Murrayshaugh."

Charlie muttered something between his teeth. I only heard "Murrayshaugh," but there was a syllable before which I blushed to guess at. "Ah, don't weary me out," he said aloud. "You don't think I am made of cast-iron like your Herculean rustics. It's too late now, Adam."

I turned round and looked at him earnestly. He started

to his feet with the quick anger of one who knows himself in the wrong.

"Well, what do you mean, Adam?"

"What do I mean, Charlie? It is I who should ask that question. *You* mean something by this—what is it?"

"By what?—come, come, Adam, this won't do. Don't assume the head of the family, I beg. I can manage my own affairs without any interference from you."

I thought of Lucy Murray standing alone upon yon mossy terrace, without one in the world who could know, or could lighten her grief, aware that he was here, and looking for his coming in vain, and in the warmth of my youthful feelings I was overcome.

"Charlie," said I, "you will grieve Lucy sadly if you do not go till to-morrow. Lucy is alone."

"Well, I will save her the infliction," said Charlie, with affected boldness. "It is well I had arranged it so before. I return to Edinburgh to-morrow."

"Do you want to break her heart?" I exclaimed.

"I am not answerable to any one for what I intend to do," said Charlie, sullenly.

"Yes, Charlie," said I, "you *are* answerable—to one higher than we—to Hew had he been here—even to me. What is this, Charlie? You do not mean it—it is some passing quarrel which a few words will set right."

"So!" said Charlie, with a sneer, "Miss Lucy has been complaining to you!"

My mood changed in a moment; from the utmost sorrow it became the most passionate anger. I had been labouring to prevent this inevitable rupture—now I was only eager that it should be completed.

"No," I exclaimed, "you have never known Lucy Murray. I, who have been with you so long, only begin to know you now. You—you will never know Lucy—it is well you feel yourself unworthy of her—it is fit indeed that her true heart should not be wasted upon you."

My own heart ached as I turned away from him. I had lost my friend. I began to grope in a world of shadows where truth was not; and not even the smile of Lillas could have woven again those fair ideal garments about Charlie Graeme.

We were mutually silent and sullen after that. Charlie was the first to speak.

"Adam," he said, "I don't want to quarrel with you, but I will answer to no man for my conduct; my motives and purposes are my own—and there has been quite enough of this. Walter Johnstone came out with me from Edinburgh to-day. Will you go over with me to Greenshaw to see him?"

I shrank from him—that he, unveiled and disenchanted as he was, should breathe the air which Lilies made holy—that her smile should fall upon *him*! I could hardly restrain myself, but for my old affection's sake, and for Lucy's sake, I did.

"I will follow you," I answered, "at present I cannot go."

He left the room, and, in a few minutes, the house, and I saw him go down the water whistling a merry tune, and pausing now and then to look round upon those peaceful home scenes, which his presence now desecrated to me. Murrayshaugh was in the opposite direction. I hurried along towards it under the trees, with an instinctive desire to see Lucy, and, unseen myself, to carry at least one sympathetic heart to her vicinity. It was a superstition of its kind. I had no thought of that—it was an instinct with me.

And there she certainly was upon the terrace, with her soft light plaid about her head, and her figure gliding strangely through shadows of the trees, and of the quaint, fantastic gables of the house, which the light of a young moon threw faintly on the ground at her feet. I saw her threading the maze of these, as she moved like a spirit upon the mossy garden path, and I began to fancy in the bitterness of my heart that it was thus with us all; that those shadowy unreal forms of ours were but wandering blindly through a shadowy world of pains and sorrows, which if it were not all false, was yet involved in a miserable twilight, where one knew not what was false and what was true.

The old decaying house, with its marks of gradual downfall and lingering sorrowful pride, and the one faint light in the window of the library where sat its aged possessor struggling with a young man's strength of haughty resistance against the slow ruin that was gliding upon him like a thundercloud. The low cadence of those rustling willows, wooing the answering murmur of the water—the silence of the waning evening, made sadder and more spirit-like by the wan young moon, which gave to its dimness a spectral light

and shadow—and Lucy Murray in her early youth, with not one heart that could or dared stand by her in her need, wandering among those shades, with the dark sky above, in the dim world, alone! I hurried away again. I could not look upon her.

CHAPTER VI.

Alas!

I do confess I thought all hearts were true,
As I did see the whole bright world—how fair!
For linked in happy fancies were the twain—
This beautiful—that pure—
And like the mountains of this noble land
Did Love and Faith and Honour stedfastly
Lift their high heads to the bright sun that crowned them,
As I thought, in my sight.
I do confess me—if it was a sin,
Behold these tears—for bitterly awaking,
I found I had but dreamed.

THE parlour of Greenshaw was exceedingly bright when I entered it that night—brighter in reality, for they were rejoicing over Walter's return—and brighter still in contrast with the scene I had left.

"Here he is at last," cried Walter Johnstone, starting up to shake hands with me as I entered. "Why, have you been seeing ghosts, Adam? One would think that we were the rustics and he the townsman, Charlie."

"You were always a contemplative man, Mossgray," said Edward Maxwell, greeting me warmly; "but take care—if you do not tremble for the consequences of a prescription from me, I do, I can tell you."

Edward's manner was more manly than usual. In my yearning for something to make up for the fatal loss I had sustained, I caught at this eagerly. Perhaps I had neglected him hitherto. I resolved to do so no longer.

I tried to seat myself so as to shut out Charlie from the light of that countenance, which made me forget even *his* unworthiness. I grudged him the slightest word from Lilies—I fancied how the pure soul within her would withdraw itself in lofty indignation, did she know him as I did.

"Mossgray," said Walter, "have you any message for your friend Hew Murray? Maxwell is going to follow his example, do you know?"

"How?" I asked.

"Oh, that famous appointment we have heard so much of has come at last," said Edward. "The —— regiment are to have the benefit of my learned services, and they are lying at some heathenish place not far from Hew's head-quarters. The name I have learned to write after a day's practice—but the pronunciation—come now, Walter, be merciful—don't make me desperate by forcing these dislocated syllables over my lips—at least not in Miss Johnstone's presence."

"Oh, never mind Miss Johnstone—Lilie is not such an epicure in sounds," said Walter. "Come along, Mixy. After all, man, I believe you don't know the true secret so well as I do. A professed lady's man should never be ladylike himself. What do you say, Mossgray? Do you hear me, Charlie—am I not right?"

Mixy was our familiar contraction of Edward's respectable surname—we were rather proud of our ingenuity in manufacturing a diminutive which suited name and profession alike so well; and he took it with wonderful good humour. To-night however he seemed displeased a little. I did not wonder; for who could endure to be exposed to ridicule in the presence of Lilius?

"You're right in the abstract, Wat," answered Charlie, with perfect coolness: "but wrong in this particular instance. To think of giving counsel to Mixy in such matters—why, Mixy's irresistible!"

Edward coloured and laughed.

"There now, Charlie, that will do. Don't believe them, I beg, Miss Johnstone; it's mere malice, I assure you."

"Take care, Lilie," said Walter, "he wants to put you off your guard. Ask Mossgray, if you don't believe me."

I coloured more deeply than Edward—this was carrying the joke too far—that Lilius, in her unapproachable purity and loftiness, should be so addressed was a kind of sacrilege. I started in jealous eagerness to save her name from the careless *badinage* which was profanity to me.

"All this has nothing to do with Hew Murray," I said hastily, and I felt my cheek burn as I turned away from Charlie. "Are you to be in Bombay, Edward?—are you to be near Hew?"

"Yes, Bombay is my first destination," said Edward. "I shall seek him out of course—and I suppose I must go in a month or two, so you may prepare your remembrances, Adam."

"And will you be long away, Mr Maxwell?" said Lillias, softly.

I bent forward at the sound of her voice. I always did—but this night, for the first time, I felt myself grow hot and angry when I saw Edward's head also inclined towards the speaker, and his face brighten to answer her.

"Many years, I fear, Miss Johnstone—many sad years—if I ever do see Fendie again."

I thought the low fall of his voice was affectation. Then I repented me—I was exquisitely uncomfortable; doing them all injustice except herself and Charlie—my pure and beautiful star whom no imperfection could cast a shadow on, and the untrue, detected man whom I had called my friend. To these, in their extremes of honour and humiliation, I could not fail to do perfect justice.

"Come, don't be sentimental," said Johnstone. "You'll come home, Mixy—not the least fear of you—and build a thing with pagodas, and a verandah, and call it by an outlandish name, and end your history like a fairy tale. Hew, poor fellow—I am afraid *his* chance of seeing Fendie again is worse than yours."

"How is that?" I exclaimed. "Has anything happened, Walter? Have you heard of anything adverse to the Murrays?"

"The poor old man has ruined himself," said Walter. "I am afraid he must lose everything—but to be sure that is not a thing to be discussed so publicly."

I turned round and looked Charlie Graeme in the face. He lifted his coward eyes to me for a moment in quick self-consciousness, but they fell before mine. This then was the pitiful reason—I turned indignantly away. I could scarcely bear to look at him again.

We all rose to leave Greenshaw together. Walter accompanied us to Fendie. I put my arm through his hurriedly, and kept him behind, while Charlie and Edward went on before us. I was eager to question him about Murryshaugh, and eager to escape from the society of my cousin.

"If it is no breach of confidence, Walter," I said, "I would be glad if you could tell me, what this is that seems to threaten Murryshaugh?"

"It is no breach of confidence now," said Johnstone, "for I fear it must very soon be public enough. Murrayshaugh undertook a heavy responsibility long ago for some old friend, Adam; and many years since this friend died, and the whole burden of the debt fell upon Mr Murray, so that only the unusual forbearance of the creditor kept him from being ruined. But now the original creditor, who knew the circumstances, is also dead, and his heir will have no mercy, so that the old man I fear must give up everything. I am afraid, Adam, they will think of me very unfavourably—but that my partner happened, before I joined him, to be their creditor's agent, is of course no fault of mine. It annoys me though, often; I wish you would just mention that when you write to Hew—not that any sensible person would blame me of course—but only there's an uncomfortable feeling."

"Hew will understand," said I, "but of course I will do what you ask me, Walter; and Murrayshaugh will lose all—did you say all?—and can nothing be done to help him?"

"Nothing but paying the money," said the man of business by my side, "and it's a very heavy sum, what with costs and interest, and other such devourers of impoverished means—and besides, Murrayshaugh is too proud to receive a favour, Adam, even from you. He would rather lose everything, you know. I confess, harsh and repulsive as he has always been, there will be something wanting in the countryside if that proud old man does not decay peacefully here, like any other ruined tower—but he would take assistance as an insult—you know he would."

I did know it, and went on sadly, thinking of the desolate household, and scarcely remembering my companion's presence.

"And by the by, Mossgray," said Walter abruptly, "you might mention that—about my partner being this man's agent—to Miss Murray; not that she will care of course—but just—one does not like to be unjustly blamed."

"Lucy does not know," said I, "but I will tell her, Walter, since you wish it. Poor Lucy!—I mean," I added, as I saw his keen eye shoot from me to Charlie, who walked before us, with an intelligent glance, "I mean it will be so great a trial to her to leave Murrayshaugh."

Johnstone did not speak. I felt that this was not known to me only, and I remembered bitterly then, that on *her* the scorn would lie, the stigma of being slighted and deserted;

and that scarcely either man or woman would think the worse of him—him, the faithless coward who had thus failed in need.

I scarcely recollect how Charlie and I managed our brief intercourse after that, but it was a very great relief to me when he departed next day. For the first time since we knew each other, Charlie went into Fendie to take his departure alone, with no one to bid him farewell. I believe he felt in some degree the emphasis of the broken custom. I almost believe he would have been glad then to undo what he had done—but the die was cast—it was too late.

A few days after, I went to Murrayshaugh, anxious, if I could manage it indirectly, to see Lucy, and yet afraid to meet her. It was a chill day for summer, with a clouded sky and a loud boisterous breeze tossing the long willow boughs into a sort of fantastic unearthly mirth, which moved me, much as the unseemly merry-making of a mourner might have done. Lucy was sitting in a favourite corner of hers, at the end of the terrace, reading—at least she had a book in her hand. As I approached the stile, and little bridge, over the Murrayshaugh burn, under cover of the eldritch willow branches, she perceived me, and observing that I hesitated to enter, beckoned me to her. I obeyed at once.

I do not think she was paler that day than she had always been, but there was a grave composure about her face which made her seem so. Whatever struggle there had been it was over—and I remember a consciousness of something clear and chill about her, such as one feels in the air after a storm—an atmosphere in which everything stands out in bold relief, disclosing all its points and angles against the distinct far-distant sky. Yet Lucy was no less benign—no less gentle than she had always been.

"I wanted to see you, Adam," she said. "I will write to Hew to-day—have you anything to say to him?"

"No," said I, stammering and hesitating, for I felt painfully the great event, the era in our lives which had become known to me since I saw her last. "No, Lucy—except what Hew does not need to be told, I hope—that I constantly think of him as of my most dear friend, and that scarcely anything in the world would delight me so much as to see him again."

"I will tell him," said Lucy; "one likes to hear such things sometimes, Adam, even when one is in no doubt of them—and I will tell him any other pleasant thing you know,

to make amends for the sad news I must send him—for I am afraid that is certain now, Adam, which I said before was only possible—we must leave Murrayshaugh.”

“Is there no way of averting this calamity?” I exclaimed.

“You know my father, Adam,” said Lucy, “he does not trust me as he might do; but I have almost been acting as a spy these few days, and there is no hope I see; for one of the few trials that can really shake his iron nature is this of leaving home, and if there was any hope of averting it, he would try all means before he yielded.”

“Lucy,” said I, “help me to present my petition to your father—beg him to remember how greatly I am indebted to you all, and entreat him to consider me thus far as his son. If what I have will do, why should he not take it, Lucy? I am a young man—I am ashamed of my own indolence—I will go and seek my fortune like Hew, and will be far happier so than as I am. Lucy—”

“Hush, Adam,” said Lucy, stopping me, as I eagerly pleaded with her, “you must not think of this. I cannot suffer you to say another word, and you know my father with his harsh pride would not be indebted even to his own son for such assistance. No, no, he will bear his own burden alone, and so must I—that it is not easy or light is a lesser matter—we must bear our own lot; but, Adam, I am glad you have said this—I am glad,” said Lucy slowly, a gush of sudden tears coming to her eyes, which seemed to flow back again, and did not fall. “I am glad you would have *done* it, Adam. I will mind it when I am heavy again, and sinking—and I will tell Hew.”

“But, Lucy, listen to me,” I exclaimed. “May I not speak to Murrayshaugh? may I not ask your father?”

“Not unless you wish to make him desperate, Adam. Nay, do not look impatient. To satisfy you, I will mention it to him myself, and even urge it if I can. I know what the issue will be, but I will do you this justice, Adam—are you content?”

I was compelled to be so. I hardly could have dared myself, under any circumstances, to offer pecuniary assistance to Murrayshaugh.

We parted very soon. Lucy did not make the slightest allusion to Charlie—there was not even a hint or inference which I could fancy pointed to him. She was very composed—so much so, as to make it evident to me, who knew her well,

that there had indeed been some grievous troubling of those quiet waters, before so dead a stillness fell upon them—but no one who knew her or observed her less could have seen any trace of a crisis past, or a great struggle completed, in the grave composure of her manner. Whatever memorials of the storm there might be within, there were none without.

I thought when I left her of an ascending road leading westward from Fendie, which, when you look along its line at night, seems to go off so abrupt and chill into the clear cold sky beyond, that its solitary wayfarers mysteriously disappear there, into the luminous blank of heaven, and you watch them with a feeling of desolate loneliness, as they glide in silence away. I thought of Lucy on that road alone—since then, whenever I recall her memory, I have fancied I saw her slight figure there, travelling away steadily into the cold horizon, unwavering and alone.

CHAPTER VII.

He speired at her mother, he speired at her father,
He speired at a' her kin,
But he speiredna the bonnie lass hersel,
Nor did her favour win.—KATHERINE JANFARIE.

WALTER JOHNSTONE remained nearly a month at Fendie. During this time he made two or three visits to Edinburgh, but as a new beginner, he was not yet very much cumbered with business. He was the brother of Liliass—I became interested in all his pursuits, and indulgent of all his foibles. We were seldom separate; for if I was abroad with Walter almost all the day, I sat in my especial corner in the Greenshaw parlour all the evening, and that privilege was cheaply purchased by any fatigue or inconvenience. I fancied I began to make some silent gradual progress. I fancied Liliass was scarcely so shy as she used to be in my presence, and I myself began to be a little more rational in my adoration. To the devout homage of the age of chivalry, I endeavoured to add a little of that more ordinary and slighter thing, which is called “paying attention.” I adopted as

much of it as the shyness of my deeper feeling would permit, and almost envied, while I was offended by, the fluent ease of Maxwell, who like myself was a frequent visitor at Greenshaw, but who, unlike me, could be quite at ease with Liliás, and ventured to treat her like any ordinary girl. Ordinary girl! what do I say? there was no such being in existence to me. Unapproachable, above all others, was my own queen and lady, but the light of her presence shed a reflection upon *them*. I owed them all a reverence for her sake.

Maxwell was preparing to go away, he said. I wished him in India with all my heart, and wondered audibly why he delayed so long. Not that I was what is vulgarly called jealous; but while I did feel envious of any sharer in my sunshine, I grudged that it should fall on one to whom it was merely common light. I was angry because he did "pay attention" to Liliás, and I thought meanly of him because, admitted as he was to her society, he could be content with "paying attention." Altogether his presence irritated me. I heartily wished him away.

Walter Johnstone was a pleasant companion—even forgetting, had that been possible, whose brother he was: we became great friends. He was too acute not to perceive how matters stood, and I fancied he had no desire to discourage me. We were out together on the last day of his stay at Greenshaw: he had become very confidential, he told me his circumstances with his partner, his anticipated income, his intention of taking a house in York Place; and finally, the last and greatest of all, his prospect of getting a mistress to the house. I listened with the greatest interest, and congratulated with the utmost warmth—it was impossible for any brother to have been more sympathetic than I—and then, with sudden boldness, I poured out into his ear my own great secret. When the first barrier was removed, the flood poured forth too strongly for any diffidence to check it. I spoke very fervently, as I felt. I fancy it must have been with some sort of natural eloquence too, for Walter's hand trembled when he grasped mine, and promised me his help.

Before I recollected myself, while we were still in a kind of cloud of excited earnestness, I found myself in Mr Johnstone's presence; and then, as there is no boldness like the nervous boldness of your shy man when he reaches the needful heat,

I made speedy conquest of him. Then I was ushered into the well-known parlour, with its forenoon look of quietness and new arrangement, to wait for Liliás.

The slow sunbeams stealing through the blinds, the chairs standing formally in their places, the closed piano, the books replaced in their shelves, the work-table withdrawn in its corner; how vividly I remember all these homely usual things, and how solemn they made my waiting. She came at last—and then I remember in a mist how the full tide of my eloquence poured forth again, and how I was successful. Yes, successful! I left Greenshaw triumphantly, the proud possessor of the plighted troth of Liliás.

I returned home in happy unconsciousness of how or where I went. On the way I met Maxwell, I recollect, and was too much elevated above all ordinary things to do more than speak the briefest words of recognition to him, overflowing though I was with the universal benevolence of a light heart; and yet, withal, I remember how some faint ghost of consciousness haunted me that I was not happy enough—that Liliás's consent was sadly mechanical, that it lacked—but no! I was not so profane as that; I could see nothing lacking in Liliás.

I was not to see her again that night—she was engaged at some Fendie party—and so I wandered the evening out by the water-side, flying from less ethereal society. I had half an idea of going to tell Lucy, but, like a miser, I chose to exult over my secret treasure a little longer before I shared the joy of it with any one.

And I remember well what wondrous dreams glided before my eyes, in bright processions, peopling yonder far-away glades and noble trees with groups of fairy figures, more beautiful than ever dreamer saw before. I saw her pass over the threshold of Mossgray with her bridal grace upon her. I saw her dwell there in her gracious, growing womanhood, drawing all pleasant things towards her as flowers turn to the sun; and though my heart did indeed beat high with proud gladness, when I remembered that it was *my* name she shed so sweet a lustre on, and that it was *I* who stood beside her in all the shifting groups of my fancy—even that stood aside, as selfish rejoicings must always do, in presence of the supreme joy I had in herself. That she was—that in our dim world there shone this one especial star, as true, as pure, as gracious as the heavens—whose constant outcoming must be

beneficence and love; whose constant meed—too poor a one for her lofty deservings—must be blessings and honour. I could not fathom the depths of my own happiness—I could but float upon its sunny stream.

The next morning rose brightly in all the brilliant joy of June, and as early as I could venture, I set out for Greenshaw. The slight morning traffic of those quiet Fendie streets—the cottage wives, upon its outskirts, going about their cheerful household labour—the domestic sounds that came pleasantly from the wayside houses—I remember them with the sunshine of my own joy over all, giving harmony and finest keeping to the homely picture. At last I approached the well-known holly hedge. A woman stood at the gate looking down the lane; the parlour-blinds were closed; there was a look of excitement about the house, as if something unusual had happened. I hurried on, noticing *that* in my haste, but too pleasantly expectant to think of it.

The woman at the door was Mr Johnstone's factotum—a sensible, matronly person, who exercised the more laborious duties of housekeeper, for which Lillias was too inexperienced and young.

"Good morning, Margaret," I said, as I came up and was about to pass in.

Margaret stretched out her hand to stop me.

"Oh, Mossgray!"

There was evident distress and trouble on her face. A slight tremor of alarm came over me.

"Has anything happened?" I said. "What is the matter, Margaret?"

"Ower muckle—ower muckle," said the housekeeper of Greenshaw, lifting her apron to her eyes; "oh, for onysake dinna gang in!—and yet he maun ken—there's nae use trying to keep it frae him."

The last part of the sentence was spoken under her breath; I became very much agitated.

"What is it, Margaret? Is Lillias ill? What has happened?"

"I'll tell ye, Mossgray," said Margaret, quickly, the arm which she had extended to bar my entrance falling to her side. "It wad be dearly telling her, she had been ill this day. She'll live yet to ken, that the sorest fever that ever chained a mortal to a sick bed wad hae been a blessed tether o' her wilful feet this woefu' morning. Dinna think o' her, Maister

Adam. I ken it's hard, but ye maun try ; dinna think o' her—she's no wurdy o't."

I clutched the woman's arm, angry and eager. I could not speak.

"Weel then, she's gane—she's away—her that was the light o' our e'en—that we couldna see ill in—that I've heard ye even to the very angels, Mossgray. She's gane—fled out from her father's house with yon young haverel o' a doctor, that has neither wealth to keep, nor wit to fend for her. Oh, guid forgie me, Mr Adam ! what have I dune ? "

My face alarmed her, I fancy. I pressed blindly in—Walter Johnstone stood before me. I was close upon him before I was aware of his presence ; I looked in his face.

He turned from me with a burst of emotion, which seemed to wake me from some terrible nightmared sleep.

"Mossgray, I did not know it—I had no suspicion of this. Believe me, Adam, believe me, that I am blameless ! She has deceived us all ! "

I felt a hoarse contradiction struggling from my dry lips—still I could not bear *her* blamed. Then I turned away ; I could hold no further parley with any one ; I hurried into the sheltering solitude of my own lonely house.

The bright world without mocked and scorned me—the passers-by looked wonderingly at my stricken face. I could not linger by the water-side now, in the first shock of my vanished and ruined dreams. I fled into this solitary room, within the silent walls of which so many slow years have passed since then, and threw myself into my chair, and pressed my throbbing head between my hands. It was only then that I realized what had come upon me.

I am an old man now, and these passionate struggles of youth have faded in the far distance, veiled in the gentler mists of memory. Yet I do remember them—I do remember me of minute and trifling things—the open book lying there upon this floor—the solitary lily drooping in its vase—the snowy leaf that had fallen upon the window-ledge below ; and how the pale and fierce light of my calamity fixed the image of them for ever on the tablets of my heart. I remember—it is not such seasons that men can forget.

I had lost her for ever—alas ! that was not all—she had never been. The conviction forced itself upon me till I grew well nigh mad. I dashed my clenched hands into the air ; I could not restrain the wild fit of passion, the irrational

frenzy that possessed me. I was alone ! the things which I had worshipped and made my idols were things of air—mists of my early morning, melting away before the stern and sober light—and I was left here desolate, forlorn, and solitary, and there was nothing true under the sun.

It is a bitter and a sorrowful thing to mourn for the dead—to lament over those who have gone away out of this shadowy land into the brighter country, where they yet are, and shall be, all the more sure in their wonderful existence that we see them not. But to mourn for those who have never been—to behold stars fall from your horizon, the glory of whose shining was but a phantasm of your brain, a creation of your own soul ; to awake suddenly from your contemplation of some noble and beautiful spirit, the fairest that ever gladdened mortal vision, and to find that it *is* not, and *was* not, and that the place, which in your dream was illuminated by its glorious presence, is filled by a shadowy thing of unknown nature, which you never saw before—this is the bitterest of griefs. If there is sorrow more hard than this, I bow my head to it in fear and reverence ; but this is my woe, and prince of woes.

Drifting from false anchorage, surrounded by spectral ships and ghostly receding shores, hopelessly driven over the treacherous sea ; with no light but an indefinite twilight, sickening the faint heart with visions of shadowy haven and harbour, and false security. A world of mists—a universe of uncertain, unknown existences, which are not as you have dreamed, and among whom you must go forth alone, no longer devoutly to believe and warmly to love, but to grope darkling in the brightest noonday, to walk warily, shutting up the yearning heart within you, in jealous fear. It is hard to make this second beginning—hard to fight and struggle blindly against this sad necessity—yet the poor heart yields at last ; either to put on the self-wounding mail of doubt and suspicion, or to live in dim and mournful patience, a hermit all its days.

CHAPTER VIII.

Oh ! wherefore should I busk my heid ?
Oh ! wherefore should I kame my hair ?
When my true love has me forsook,
And says he'll never loe me mair.
Oh, Martmas wind ! when wilt thou blaw
And shake the dead leaves aff the tree ?
Oh, gentle death ! when wilt thou come
And take a life that wearies me ?—OLD BALLAD.

I took little note of how months or weeks went after that era. I lost that summer time. It has fallen entirely from the reckoning of my life, leaving only some vestiges of what looks now like incipient madness behind ; for I was entirely alone ; shut out as much from that ordinary communication with the world, which painfully and beneficially compels the suppression of one's agony, as I was from all human sympathy, all kindness, all compassion. I had lost all ; my dreams of a brighter home—my friends—all were gone. Hew Murray far away in India, and his sad sister Lucy alone in Murrayshaugh—to no others in the wide world could I look for any of those gentle offices which belong to friendship ; and the one was thousands of miles away—the other was no less solitary, no less stricken than I.

I did not see her during the whole of that summer. Had there been no cloud overshadowing her own lot, I believe I might have sought the balm of Lucy's pity, and perhaps been in some degree comforted ; but as it was I never sought to see her—I saw no one—I shut myself up through those scorching summer days—I remember yet how their un pitying sunshine sickened me to the very soul—in this solitary room. I wandered ghost-like on the water-side at night ; I neglected everything that I had formerly attended to. I held no communication even with the servants of my lonely household, which I could possibly avoid. It was little wonder that they should think me crazed ; the belief shot in upon my own brain sometimes like an arrow—almost the consciousness that I was mad.

I might have been—how soon I know not—but that I was mercifully snatched from the edge of the precipice.

The summer was over, the autumn days were darkening and growing chill, and the wan water of Fendie carried showers of faded leaves upon its bosom, and grew husky and dark with frequent floods. The transition from the fierce summer sunlight soothed me. These six terrible months had done on me the work of years. I was young—almost a lad still—but I had always been older than my years, and pain brings with it unenviable maturity. In my solitude I felt untimely age come upon me; I carried in my youth's frame a man's worn-out heart.

My housekeeper, Nancy Mense, suffered no one to come near me but herself; and her own services were rendered in silence, with something of that compassionating awe, which we hear is paid to the victims of mental malady in the East. I had never observed this until the day of which I am about to speak.

It was a dim, cloudy October day, overcast with showers, and I was subdued and softened; the drooping, disconsolate sky and damp air seemed to hush the fiery pains within me. Mrs Mense entered my apartment, and, without speaking, laid a letter upon the table. I noticed a painful solicitude in her face, as she looked at me before she left the room; I took up the letter—it was from Lucy Murray.

"We shall be far away before you receive this, Adam. I write, because hereafter you might think I did you wrong in sending you no farewell. Of our own affairs I can tell you little, even if *now* you cared to hear of them. I can guess that my father gives up almost all he has; all the land, everything but a bare pittance that will merely maintain us—and the house. He has not parted with Murrayshaugh itself. He vows he never will—but utterly reduced in means as we must be, we must leave it now—perhaps—perhaps sometime, if good days ever come, to return home again.

"I dare not tell you where we are going; indeed, I do not even know. You know my father's harsh and haughty pride; he says no one shall see our poverty who has ever heard our name before. He might have lingered longer, I believe, had I not told him of your generous offer; he took it, as I fancied he would, with hard and bitter anger as a humiliation. Yet thank you again, Adam, for thus cheering me, when the world indeed was black enough around us.

"For yourself, what can I say, Adam Graeme? that you are not alone; but alas! that is small consolation. Who

can tell the appointed place which this trial has in the lives of each of us, the appointed purpose for which it has been sent? Adam, let us not look upon those wrecks of the vain dreams we fancied true; all is not untrue, though these are; all is not dark because these lights have failed. The feverish flashing of these meteors is gone for ever; but there remains the sober, stedfast, healthful light of day, the sunshine of heaven over all.

"Adam, let us awake; let us think no longer of those who have done us wrong, but of Him who took so grievous wrong upon Himself for our deliverance. It is not meet that the lives for which he paid so wonderful a price should go down ignobly to the grave; do I need to say more to you? do I need to do more than bid you arise, Adam, for His sake, and do the devoir of a man, whether He send sunshine or gloom, a dark day or a bright.

"I have only one word to say more; be careful, Adam: look well to your words and deeds, lest the tempter take advantage of them to bring more sin among us. I cannot venture to speak more plainly, but as you would have others—others whom both of us have held very dear—preserved from a deadly snare and sin, look heedfully to yourself, and let this wild grief engross you no more.

"Write to Hew; and remember us all if we never meet again. Farewell, Adam, and farewell.

"LUCY MURRAY."

I was roused by Lucy's letter, roused in some degree to remember my manhood, and to think how I wasted it; but one struggle does not overcome a grief like this. So I fell into a bitterly selfish mood, contrasting her lot with mine—her cold womanlike submission with my self-torture—and while I thought of the conclusion of her letter, with a certain degree of idle languid wonder, I hugged my calamity closer to my heart. No one had fallen from so bright a heaven into so blank an earth as I; no one had ever equalled my misfortune, and who but myself could comprehend my grief.

The wailing breeze suited me; I opened the window and leaned out, resting my brow upon my hands. Heavy rain-drops fell from the eaves upon my unsheltered head—I did not heed them.

The sound of voices below arrested my attention; I remember wondering that they did. No later than the day

before they would have made me shrink into myself jealousy, in fear of contact with the speakers ; now I only remained still and listened.

"My good woman, I want to see Mr Graeme," said a strange voice ; "I assure you I will take no denial from *you*, so it is needless to keep me here on the damp soil—my feet are quite wet enough already

"Your feet are nae concern o' mine," said Mrs Mense, with some ill-humour in her tone ; "nae doubt ye can change them when ye gang hame, like other folk. But my maister's no heeding about seeing strangers ; and sae I tell ye—no meaning ony disrespect—once for a'."

"But your master does not choose to let you answer for him, I presume," said the stranger. "You can surely ask him at least."

"And wha has as guid a right to answer for him, puir lad!" said Mrs Mense, her voice sinking to an under-tone, "as me, that have fended for him a' his days? I tell ye there's nae need for asking, Sir ; I ken weel enough he'll no see onybody."

"This is insufferable!" said the applicant for admission. "Here, my good girl, do *you* go and tell your master that I want particularly to speak with him—I, Doctor Pulvers of Edinburgh."

"Eh, I daurna for my life!" exclaimed the shriller voice of Janet, Mrs Mense's niece ; "I wadna face Mossgray for—"

"Haud your peace, ye silly tawpie!" cried Mrs Mense. "Do ye mean to say *that's* like a gentleman, speiring at the fuil of a gilpie, and me here?"

"Don't be afraid, my girl," said the stranger. "What is it that alarms you for Mossgray?"

"If you say anither word o' your havers, I'll fell ye, Jen!" exclaimed my housekeeper, in a voice shrill with passion. Then I heard a slight noise, as if the girl had made her escape.

"Well, Ma'am," said the stranger, "I hope you'll condescend to inform me what special reason you have that I should not see your master."

Mrs Mense seemed to falter.

"I've nae special reason, Sir ; only if Mossgray doesna heed about seeing strangers, it's nae business o' mine or yours either."

"But why does he object to see strangers?" persisted the pertinacious visitor.

"I didna say he objected; I only said he wasna heeding; and it's no my place to be aye asking the whys and the wherefores. Maybe you never were no weel, or had a sair heart yoursel? and if a gentleman like the laird canna be fashed wi' a' the gangrel bodies that come about the town, naebody has ony business wi' that."

"But I am no gangrel body," said the stranger. "Come now, you have kept me out long enough; if the young man is unwell, that is only another reason why I should see him—I'm a physician."

"I didna say he was no weel."

"Then in the name of wonder, what did you say?" exclaimed the stranger. "I shall have serious suspicions, I assure you, my good woman, if you answer me so. Why was the girl afraid to speak to her master? and what do you mean?"

The heavy drops from the eaves had fallen one by one on my head—my hair was wet with them—my brow damp with more painful dew. I rang my bell hurriedly.

"Ye can bide till I come down," I heard Mrs Mense say, as she shut the door, "and I'll ask the laird, since ye will hae't; but ye'll stay where ye are till I come back again."

In a minute or two after she appeared at the door of my study; her ruddy face was paled by emotion, and her eyes turned upon me with a painful solicitous look that smote me to the heart.

"What is the matter?" I asked as calmly as I could, "and why do you not bring that man up to me at once, Nancy, instead of keeping him so long at the door?"

Again she looked at me—a conscious, terrified look, which I trembled to interpret.

"Oh, Mossgray! for the Lord's sake tak tent o' yoursel! you're an innocent lad—ye aye were an innocent lad—ye kenna what ill may be brewing. I saw ane that saw Mr Charlie in the toun yestreen—oh, Mr Adam, dinna look sae fearsome!—and if ye canna meet this man—if ye've ony fear—just say the word, and I'll send him away."

I felt large drops of moisture burst upon my brow; I shuddered through my whole frame; I felt an irresistible inclination to flee away, and escape from all these miseries

for ever. I had indeed awakened from my frenzy of grief—and such an awakening!

“Why should I fear to see him?” I asked, the words refusing to come plainly from my stammering tongue. “What is this? Do you think—do you think I am mad?”

She did not answer; but with tears streaming from her eyes she continued to fix that painful, terrified, conscious look upon my face.

I felt my nostril dilate—I felt some bitter scorching tears flood my eyes. Then I became suddenly calm.

“God help me!” I exclaimed in my agony, and my prayer was heard.

I grew calm in a sudden consciousness of restored strength. I thought steadily of Lucy and her warning; of this humble woman here, whose honest heart sorrowed and laboured for me. I was roused—I put my wrongs forth, out of my heart, and committed myself to God.

“Now,” I said, “let him come up.”

My kind housekeeper withdrew, wiping the tears from her cheeks. I saw she had acquired some sort of trembling confidence from my bearing; then I did what I could to make my appearance less conspicuously negligent, and then with a nervous concentrated quietness, I waited for my visitor.

He looked me very steadily in the face, with a singular emphatic look. I did not think at the time what was the meaning of this, or it might have raised a ferment in my veins, and made me appear as they wished me. As it was, I saluted him calmly, gliding at once into my usual manner, and feeling with a consciousness of unspeakable relief, that I was myself again.

“I have been residing in the neighbourhood for a week or two, Mr Graeme,” said my visitor, after introducing himself as Doctor Pulvers of Edinburgh, “and hearing that you were in delicate health, I took the liberty of volunteering a call; that is to say—for I am taking too much credit to myself—some of your friends begged me to do so, expressing themselves very anxious about you.”

“My cousin, Mr Charles Graeme, I presume?” said I. “My friends are not so many that I should have any difficulty in discovering them.”

Doctor Pulvers looked confused. “No, no. Mr Charles, whom I have the pleasure of knowing, is no doubt much at-

tached to you, Mr Graeme ; but, to tell the truth, the principal person was a lady—and a very young and charming one, I assure you. Mrs Edward Maxwell.”

It was a lie, I knew, and I contained myself—the person who bore that name was not my Lillas ; but I would not have inflicted on Charlie such a pang as shot through my heart, while these words were deliberately pronounced in my ear, for all the evil he had done, and for all he designed to do. This was the application of the touch-stone ; my simple unsuspecting wits were miraculously sharpened as I thought—I saw that this was the test.

“Mrs Maxwell is very kind,” I said, and I did not falter.

Then he began to inquire into my symptoms.

“This is quite useless,” I said. “I cannot suppose, Doctor Pulvers, that you can have been in the neighbourhood as you say, without hearing from some benevolent friend the history and origin of any sufferings I may have been enduring. Such as they are, they belong to myself alone, and admit of no probing ; but I am glad that I can authorize you to satisfy the sudden anxiety of my friends, by an assurance of my rapidly progressing recovery. I beg you will carry my thanks to all ; but symptoms I have none to tell you, unless it were of one or two swellings of indigestion which I have been sensible of lately—and that I presume is a tolerably healthful emotion, and one which you are not accustomed to class as a symptom of disease.”

Doctor Pulvers looked annoyed and discomfited, and I became sorry for him ; however he changed the subject with admirable art, and had plunged me into a long discursive conversation before I was well aware. He was an intelligent, agreeable man, and I had shut myself out from all society so long, that I forgave him the object of his visit, and would have almost forgotten it, had he not with most delicate tact and *finesse*, when he fancied me completely off my guard, suddenly introduced that name again, which made my whole frame thrill as with a wound, and brought the moisture in cold showers to my brow. He repeated this again and again, but each time I conquered.

At last he rose to leave me.

“Mr Graeme,” he said, offering me his hand, and looking again in my face, but this time with a less singular steadiness of gaze than before, “I assure you I am most happy that I

have found you so much better than your friends imagined. I congratulate you heartily on your evident sound health and good constitution ; but, if you will permit me to advise, do not try it so severely as you have done, and come yourself, and let all interested in you see how perfectly competent you are on this, and all other matters, to judge for yourself."

His tone was grave and significant—I believed the man. He was glad that his mission had failed ; he was glad that I was not added to the list of his miserable patients. I had strength enough left to part with him in firm calmness—nay, I went further ; I accompanied him to the door, and saw him leave Mossgray.

And then—those bitter, scorching, desperate tears of manhood that burned upon my cheek—those convulsive sobs that shook me with their fierce strength—this fearful loneliness, which left me a prey to all the fiery fancies within, and all the secret foes without—"God help me!" I had need.

A sudden fancy took me, as I wrestled fiercely with this fierce affliction. I left the house, and hurried along that side of the grounds of Mossgray which immediately skirts the road—where there was a wall of four or five feet high, lined by old trees, which hung their high foliage over, shadowing the highway below. They were nearly bare then, but under the sombre covert of a group of firs, and taking advantage of the stump of an old ash tree, I ventured to look over. Doctor Pulvers was proceeding at a dignified slow pace along the road, while some one approached hurriedly in the other direction—I looked again ; it was Charlie. They must meet immediately beneath the spot where I stood—I drew back among the firs and waited.

"Well, Doctor?"

"You have fortunately been quite misinformed, Mr Charles," said the constrained voice of the physician. "Your cousin has as perfect possession of his faculties as either you or I. I am glad to be able to inform you of his perfect health. He is not either very robust or very happy, I dare say, and has the good sense and courage not to veil the latter, with false pride or levity, as I have seen many young men do, but his constitution is sound, and his mind elastic. I have not the slightest fear of him."

There was a dead pause ; for a moment or two after, Charlie said not a word. Then he exclaimed, somewhat loudly,—

"Well, of course I am very happy to hear it. The more fool he, to give these gossips the chance of speaking of him so; but Adam was always a sentimental fellow. Of course it is a great satisfaction to me to find it all groundless."

They passed on. I heard no more of their conversation, nor wished to hear; and I was too thoroughly worn out to be moved by my former passions, either of sorrow or anger. So I took rest—not very quiet nor peaceful, but still more natural and refreshing than I had known for many nights and days.

CHAPTER IX.

' There is no light in earth or heaven
 But the cold light of stars,
 And the first watch of night is given
 To the red planet Mars—
 Is it the gentle star of love?
 The star of love and dreams?
 Ah, no! from that blue tent above
 A hero's armour gleams.—LONGFELLOW.

I WAS roused. I began to understand the necessity of that ruling one's own spirit which is greater than taking a city. I began to see that my self-martyrdom, with all the indulgence of its pain, was but, in its kind, a selfish pleasure after all, and that the duty before me was not any shutting out of the common mercies of the world, or lingering act of self-torment, but a firm and manly subduing of my sorrow. It is a trial even to make this discovery. It is a hard test of patience, when the soul quivering with its own suffering yearns to plunge into some great matter—to endure, to do, to sacrifice—and feels within its aching veins the spirit of a Xavier, eagerly flying to the painfulest labour, and refusing the solace of usual comfort—to have the blank of a steady endurance offered to it instead; to be compelled to yoke its turbulent might of grief again to the common toils of every day; to put on the usual smile, to draw the usual outer garment of ease and seeming peacefulness over the wild pulses of a wounded heart. I say you shall find more scope for

desperate bravery in this than on any louder field of battle ; for true it is, and of saddest verity, that there be many men to whom taking a city is a small and light matter, in comparison with the firm ruling of this precious stronghold and violent garrison within ; many men who, like the proud Syrian of old, would willingly dare the fiery process of some sudden miracle, but with hearts full of bitter disappointment and pride, would turn from the placid Hebrew waters in which the blessing lay.

I was bound to the stake. I was compelled to rule myself with the iron hand of a despot ; to return to all my ordinary occupations ; to come and go as I had been wont ; to listen and to speak of things and persons whose names sent my blood flooding back upon my heart, in the shivering heats and chills of agony, with an assumption of calm ease and indifference the while terrible to bear. And I did all this, that my only relative might be prevented from dooming me to the prison-house of madness—might be preserved from the sin of unrighteously making himself master of the lands of one by whom he had been regarded as a dearly cherished brother. My lands ! I would have given them gladly for the joy of believing that Charlie had not meditated a cruelty like this ; but for the sake of my good name, and for his own miserable sake, that his sin should at least go no further than intention, I constrained myself to bear this hard and painful discipline of ordinary life. I could not go away as I longed to do, and in strange lands and among new faces endeavour to forget myself, and the loneliness which was my fate. I was bound first to vindicate myself to our little world, and remove all occasion of evil speaking ; for my liberty and my means were both concerned. Had Charlie established his case, I must have lost all.

Edward Maxwell had not gone to India. After *her* fate was united to his, her father made some exertions to establish them at home. They were shortly going to Glasgow I heard, but as far as I could I shut my ears to their name ; and though many mentioned them before me with cruel smiles, there were some who knew more truly the nature of my feelings, and tried to hush the rest. But it is hard to do what I laboured to accomplish. To convince one's self that the being held highest and most lovable through all one's lifetime has altogether vanished from this earth, though there still remains the external form in which the imagination shrouded so fair

and beautiful a spirit. I knew indeed that the Lillias of my fancy had never been, but I could not mourn for her as for one dead.

No, the dead are sure. Our most jealous fears cannot think of change—our utmost misery of grief cannot suppose end of existence to them. I fancy the very death makes them more peculiarly our own; but far other and far bitterer is such a calamity as mine.

I was shortly to prove both.

The Murrays were gone, no one knew whither; a single servant remained in the house, but she could give me no information as to the retreat of her master. I felt that I did wrong to ask her, and when I wrote to Hew, I did not repeat the question.

In the beginning of the year, Hew answered my letter. I remember noticing with sudden fear that the address was not written in his hand; but the long letter within reassured me, and I did not observe, in my eagerness to read it, another brief note which dropped from the enclosure upon the table.

There was a tone of subdued and unexpressed sympathy in the letter which touched me deeply. No one in this world, not even Lucy, could enter into my feelings as Hew could, and what he said was the inferred sorrow of closest friendship; the sympathy which does not speak of your grief, but which enters into your heart, and stands at your own stand-point, and thinks as you think—as you think, but more gently—as you will think when your grief is further away, and in the hushed and quiet land of memory it has become dim and calm.

“Cheerly, Adam,” wrote Hew Murray, “we are becoming men; and if there are harder processes involved in that than in the old disciplines we used to share together, we must nevertheless bear the heavier means for the sake of the greater end. Manlike and masterful as our fathers were, when the old steel breast-plates at Murrayshaugh and Mossgray covered brave hearts beating high to the natural warfare which they carried over the Border. They too must have had foes, less tangible than the rough barons and yeomen of Cumberland, those fighting men of other generations; and I begin to think, Adam, that the natural element of us all is war—active contention, strife of one kind or another—and that we depart from our most healthful state when we lay down our weapons, and endeavour to halt in the inevitable contest. No longer

for imprisoned princesses—though there is right good meaning and simple wisdom in these stories of our youth—nor yet any longer for *los* and fame, but because there is true life and health in the warfare, and because—

“Adam, we have had much and intimate intercourse, but scarcely ever have we spoken together of Him who is the centre of this world’s history, the wonderful Presence that pervades all the changes of its many ages past and to come. But, Adam, because He bids, because He leads, because He himself for the strife and for the victory’s sake was clothed as one of us. It is a wonderful history, that, of this long struggle ascending up to the very source of time, of the good and the evil, the righteousness of heaven, and the sin of earth; and now to mark the individual ways by which we solitary units, thus far down in the stream of the world’s existence, are wakened by so many different obstacles, each in his own separate course, to carry on the warfare. To turn from our idolatry of the false beautiful here, to lawful worship of the true sublime yonder; to take up arms for the Lord’s sake and do valiant service against His enemy and ours, that ancient Titan, Sin. The true work of a man, the great war worthy this humanity, which He shares who saved it.

“I think it is a gracious and blessed thing, Adam, that this natural propensity to strife within us should have so noble an outgate. Do you ever think how we used to dream long ago of delivering Scotland? and there are foes greater than the old Edward scheming against her purity and freedom now. Ah, Adam! you are happy, you are at home, and can do your devoir for our own land and people, while I, a stranger and a sojourner here, can only strive to maintain the ancient honour of our name, and commend our faith to minds which know not how to receive the one religion—the one Lord. I think I am not the kind of stuff which the mission-man should be made of, for continually I yearn for home.

“You do not tell me if you saw Lucy before she left Murrayshaugh; and I want to ask you a delicate question, Adam, which I should not put to any one whom I trusted less entirely—Charlie Graeme—what of him? Lucy does not speak of him as she once did; her last letter indeed intimates vaguely, that from the change in her own feelings towards him she has seen it necessary to break the engagement between them. Do you know anything of this?

Whether Lucy is sinned against or sinning, I cannot tell—from her letter I should fancy the latter; though certainly she is the last person in the world whom I could think of as likely to change."

Poor Lucy!—in her solitary bravery, her woman's pride, she was stouter of heart than I.

My spirit rose to the encouraging words of Hew. I too had been thinking more of late of the true end and aim of life; that momentous matter which always stands out in the twilight of grief, sometimes indeed arrayed in fantastic lights and shadows, but sometimes distinct and clear as it has been revealed. I had begun to discover how much my wayward soul was out of tune with the infinite mind disclosed to us in revelation, and the harmonious universe around. The warfare was begun within me. Hew Murray's letter was such as I needed; it stirred me to better things, it made me ashamed of my indolent brooding, my cumbering of the ground.

As I laid it down, I remarked the note which had fallen from its enclosure, and took it up with some curiosity. The handwriting was strange to me, and the first words made me start in the utmost alarm and terror—the remainder smote me down into the blank of utter grief.

"Sir,

"Finding the enclosed letter addressed to you among Mr Murray's papers, and having heard him speak of you often as a much-valued friend, I think it my duty to inform you of a most unhappy occurrence which, if it has not already resulted in death, must have placed him in the utmost danger, and made his ultimate fate almost certain. A short time ago, Mr Murray was despatched on a political mission to the Rajah of——, whom, it was thought, his firm and energetic character would especially qualify him for dealing with. The Rajah is an artful, wily, dangerous man, and Mr Murray knew before setting out that the mission was of a perilous nature. But our unfortunate friend has not been able to reach the place of his destination. Two or three days ago one of his native servants returned here, worn out with fatigue and want. He states that his master has been made prisoner by one of the predatory parties that infest that district, and that when he himself contrived to make his escape,

Mr Murray, who had made a very desperate resistance, was entirely overpowered by his captors, who were stripping him of everything he possessed, including costly presents intended for the Rajah. He was severely wounded, and Doolut (the servant) believes that these fierce native bandits would not encumber their retreat with a prisoner so helpless. At the same time, there is a possibility that his life might be preserved (though, I fear, the chances are all against it) in expectation of a ransom. Every effort has been, and will be made, to discover if he still exists, and the place of his imprisonment; though I can give you very little hope of a favourable result. This most unhappy event has occasioned much regret in all circles here, Mr Murray having been, for so young a man, very greatly respected; and I can again assure you that every exertion will be made to discover his fate with certainty.

“ I have the honour to be,

“ Sir,

“ Your most obedient servant,

“ R. CHURCHILL.”

The letter dropped from my hands; I was stunned. I had thought of death—in my thankless folly I had almost wooed it for myself—but never had it occurred to me in connection with my young, strong, life-like friends; and Hew—Hew, the dearest, truest, most noble of them all! I groaned aloud in the bitterness of my soul; I had held lightly this terrible hopeless might of death, and now I fell prostrate under its power.

Then I started in a frenzy of hope, to write to the stranger who had sent to me this sad intelligence. I do not know what I said to him; but I remember how I begged and prayed, with involuntary unconscious tears, urging my entreaty aloud in the intensity of my emotion, that nothing should be left undone; that every means that could be used, should be put into immediate operation—that my unknown correspondent would employ agents for me to prosecute the search for Hew. When I had finished, I thought it cold and indifferent—it would not do—I could not be content to depute to mercenary hands such an undertaking as this. I resolved to go myself to India, to seek for my dearest friend.

But in the mean time there was much to be done. I

could not leave home without making many arrangements, and losing precious time. So I sent off my letter, and began immediately to prepare for my journey.

CHAPTER X.

No hope—no hope ! let calm lips say, No hope,
To whom hope never was ; but as for me,
This possible is life—
And if you say it is impossible,
Yet up, up to your highest cliffs of ice
I go to light my watchfire—so perchance,
As he may see it from afar. No hope !
There never is but hope where there is love.—OLD PLAY.

LAND ! our voyage is just ending, and softly before us in the dawn of the morning rise the shores of India ; the mighty, impotent, fabulous, golden East.

But I was in no mood to indulge in the pleasant excitement and curiosity of a stranger. My anxiety, like other torments, became intolerable as it approached its end, and in feverish haste I hurried to seek the Mr Churchill who had written to me of Hew.

He was a civilian, with something of that stiff, well-drilled military look, which such officials acquire from their contact, I suppose, with their warlike brethren. He was a middle-aged man of indefinite years, endowed largely with the grave politeness of tone and manner which belongs to your sober, retired major or captain ; perfectly urbane, and not without its considerable mixture of kindness, but presenting to a stranger an unimpressible blank of courteous gravity, which to your shy man is, in most cases, an invincible barrier. I was very much agitated—I told Mr Churchill my name. He looked politely puzzled and at a loss. “ He was not aware—” I interrupted him with a statement of my errand, and an anxious inquiry for Hew.

The polite, grave man was melted ; the muscles of his face moved. “ Ah, poor Murray ! ” he said, in a tone which told me there was no more to hope.

And so it was. Every exertion had been made to ascer-

tain the fate of my unfortunate friend, and it was now certain, Mr Churchill said, that all hope or chance that he survived was at an end. Nothing had been left undone, for in Bombay Hew had many friends; but there could be no doubt that he had fallen by the hands of these assassins, and now lay in some unknown desert grave. It was now certain, there could be no doubt. I eagerly asked if this was all; if they had no positive information of Hew's death.

Mr Churchill did not comprehend the extreme agitation of my grief. He thought me excited in my intense anxiety, and became again as blankly polite as before. They had no positive information; but the want of it, to those who knew India, was quite enough, he said, and all further search was hopeless.

I was not sufficiently indifferent to be content with this. I left him to seek Hew's servant, and to make another desperate effort to discover his fate. The man Doolut was a Parsee, and professed attachment to his master too extravagantly to satisfy me, but I took him into my service and immediately began my search.

How long I remained engaged in it, and the travels and perils, and vain hopes, and blank disappointments, which I passed through while pursuing it, I cannot record. I became faint again, as I recall that time, when day by day the deferred hope sickened my very soul within me—I failed; most sadly and utterly failed; yet though the shadows of some thirty years have darkened over Hew Murray's fate, and increased its mystery, I cannot think of it yet without a flicker of hope, a throbbing sickness of desire, that has well-nigh power to send me forth on the vain quest again. Living or dead, in earth or in heaven, Hew Murray, no man has ever filled your place in your old companion's heart; and though I have had darkness enough in my own life to make me think an early deliverance from these earthly cares a blessing, yet would I give almost all that remains to me to know that you yet lived and breathed upon this lower world—to hope that I might look upon your face and hear the voice of your brotherhood again!

For years after that I wandered about the face of the earth, in all lands and countries, a solitary man; snatching here and there the solace of congenial companionship for a brief space, but only passing forth again to be forgotten. Murrayshaugh and Lucy I never could discover though I

have lingered on the outskirts of many a little French and German town, vainly endeavouring to find some trace of them. Once only have I had any communication with the family, and that was immediately after Hew's mysterious disappearance, when a few hurried blotted incoherent words came to me from Lucy, bidding me pity her in her misery; she had no one in the wide world, she said, to tell it to but me—and then in her generous gentleness, as if the words of her complaint had burst from her unawares, she essayed to comfort me, and spoke of consolation and hope. Hope and consolation! yes, so wonderful is the fabric of this humanity, that there is no sky too dark for those stars; and our sorrows lie softly on us when they have grown old with us, and become a part of our lives.

With Charlie Graeme I had no more intercourse. He took guilt to himself and never attempted to renew our former intimacy—but the sin that he had clogged his course withal, found him out ere it was far spent. He married the daughter of a Glasgow merchant reputed to be rich, whose great pretensions collapsed immediately after Charlie became connected with his family. This wife had the expensive tastes of her class, I have heard, but it happens singularly that all unsuccessful men have wives with extravagant tastes, so I give little credence to that rumour: however it happened, or whatever were the procuring causes, it is certain that Charlie Graeme, with all his gifts, was in a very short time a shipwrecked man. He died young, in poverty, and debt, and discomfort—his helpless wife did not long survive him, and they left one child—a boy—on the world's hands and mine.

This child I left, during his infancy, under the care of a servant of his mother's, and some ten years ago I had him sent to a school in Aberdeenshire, a private place of respectable standing conducted by a pragmatical Aberdeenshire man, called Monikie, who was with us at college. The boy's name is Halbert, our most famous family name. He must have nearly arrived at man's estate, but I have never seen him.

I am drawing near the end of my course. I earnestly desire to have my mind preserved from the resentment and pain of being again brought into immediate contact with those who have so deeply injured me, or with their representatives. For this reason I have never seen Halbert

Graeme, and am firmly resolved not to see him. The lad shall have full justice; I will refuse him no needful help in any profession he may choose; but though he is the last representative of our ancient name, he shall not be the heir of Mossgray. I have given Monikie all freedom in providing for him, in a way becoming his father's son—but he is not mine. I do this with no feeling of revenge towards the dead, but I cannot adopt or cherish the son of Charlie Graeme.

And Liliash—I have heard that she too has one child—a girl called by her own name—but these also I cannot dare ever to look upon. Edward Maxwell is dead; he has lived the life of a weakling, and his widow remains in England where he died. I have learned now, in my old age, to think of the Liliash of my imagination as of one who died in the early fragrance of youth, and almost to dream that her gentle, shadowy presence hovers near me, in the twilight of summer nights, when the stately flowers which bear her name shine like gleams of moonlight in the dim borders of my garden. I can bear the neighbourhood of these lilies now; their pensive beauty soothes me; but though the softening shadows of memory and years have enshrined this lily of my youth, in that radiance of tender melancholy with which we surround those who have gone down early to peaceful graves, I yet cannot and dare not enter the presence of that Liliash who has made me a solitary, joyless man. Let me be kept from them and from their children. I cannot endure the pain which their very names inflict upon me—I must always avoid and shun them. I wish them well—all health, and peace, and happiness be with them, and a brighter lot than mine; but let me be left with my dreams; the sole remaining companions, which are with me in my old age, and were with me in my youth.

Walter Johnstone is the only surviving member of our joyous boyish party. He is struggling still in the Maelstrom of care and business, maintaining his place well, as I hear, among his compeers, and training, as he can, a large family of sons and daughters. He still retains Greenshaw, but never visits it; for Walter's wife and children are fashionables in their degree, and think it expedient, as my good friend Mrs Oswald tells me, to leave the gentle enchantment of distance and ignorance about the very minute property from which their father acquires the landed designation to

which we attach a considerable share of importance in Scotland.

Greenshaw is let to strangers—I hear it is greatly altered; but I avoid it in my limited walks, the last association of deadly pain it has having obliterated in my mind all the former ones of youthful joy and sunshine. It is not in my way indeed, for the water and I travel together—I seldom leave the green line of its banks; I pursue its windings up and down with constant interest and pleasure. We never weary of each other; those ripples which I have heard all my life have an articulate tongue to me—they are connected with all the gladness I have dreamt, with all the grief I have undergone; and there are creeks and sunny promontories there which recall the shining thread of youthful visions till I can almost think I am weaving them again—

“ My eyes are filled with childish tears,
My heart is idly stirred,
For the same sound is in my ears
As in those days I heard.”

This spell of local association has always been strong upon me. As I pass along the banks of my ancient and well-beloved companion, the wan water, the changes of my life rise up before me, each with its separate scene and dwelling-place—these dells and pensive glens—these broad glades, and grouped brotherhoods of old trees—they are peopled with the things that have been; they bear upon them, as upon so many several pages, the story of my life.

And so I dwell among them, and at my pleasure am again a solitary child, a dreaming youth, a stricken man—I feel myself of kin to myself in all these changes. Swiftly these years have carried me over the world's broad highway, but with this white hair upon my head I am still the child to whose first dreams this water murmured its plaintive symphony. I know myself little wiser, and in nothing more thoughtful. It is the things around us that change—it is not we.

For I confess myself as credulous still of ideal generosity and truth, as I was when I had counted only twenty summers. I have not been able yet to tutor myself to suspicion—the vision splendid has not quite departed—I cannot put the lustre of that celestial light, which once apparelled all things, away out of my eyes, even when those eyes are old; and Nature in

her grave nobleness is not less, but more dear now, when I remember that I shall soon bid her good even, to enter into the presence of her Lord and mine. New heavens and a new earth—I cannot sever my human heart from mine own land ; and who shall say that those noble countries, casting off all impurity in the fiery trial that awaits them, shall not be our final heaven ?

I love to think that it may be so ; I love to think that the Lord, in His humanity, looks tenderly upon the mortal soil on which He sojourned in His wondrous life, and that here, perchance, in these very lands, made holy by His grace and power, our final rest shall be. It may be but a fancy ; but it comes upon me with gentle might, like the whispered comfort of an angel. A new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness—a glorified humanity which, remaining human, is mortal no longer ! with the judgment, and the condemnation, and the wars of the Lord over-past, and the earth and the heaven one fair broad country, and Himself over all, blessed for ever. These are the old man's dreams ; and they shed new glory over the pleasant places in which my lines have fallen—

“ Oh, ye fountains, meadows, hills, and groves !
Forbode not any severing of our loves !
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might.
I only have relinquished one delight,
To live beneath your more habitual sway.
I love the brooks that down their channels fret,
Even more than when I tripped, lightly as they ;
The innocent brightness of a new-born day
Is lovely yet—
The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality.”

END OF BOOK I.

BOOK II.

RESOLUTIONS.

CHAPTER I.

There was a hardness in his cheek,
There was a hardness in his eye.—PETER BELL.

"I BEG you will not misunderstand me, Mrs Oswald; I vow to you that this girl shall never cross my threshold, and if William persists in his folly he must choose between her and me; for assuredly he shall not keep his place with both. I tell you her father was a fool and a weakling, and you know the injury he did me. My mind is made up; before I receive this girl (I care nothing for her own good qualities—they do not concern me in the slightest) as my daughter, I will disown my son. If he wants to prolong her poverty, and to make himself a servant all his life, let him persist in his madness; and if you encourage him further in it, the consequences lie with yourselves. I have toiled and laboured to enrich him, and if he thwarts me thus, he shall rue it!"

The speaker was a wiry, dark man, about the middle height, with a face in which you could read habitual obstinacy. It had redeeming qualities; you could see how a great enough matter might elevate the constitutional pertinacity into brave determination, and the eyes were intelligent and clear; but the rigid muscles of his mouth wore their sternest expression to-day, and a cloud lowered darkly upon his face. He was standing with his back to the fire in a good-sized, comfortable dining-room, the front windows of which looked out upon the Main Street of Fendie. The house was withdrawn a little from the line of the neighbouring buildings, in modest dignity, and bore over its portico and stone pillars the important title "Bank;" and the obstinate gentleman in the dining-room within was Mr George Oswald, at that time the sole representative of banking interests in the borough of Fendie.

The very emphatic speech which we have already recorded, was addressed to his wife, who sat opposite to him. She was very calmly engaged with her sewing, though her face was sufficiently grave to show that her husband's words were not mere empty breath. When he had concluded, she raised her head.

"I cannot see what necessity there is for making any vows to me, George. If you are determined not to hear what I say, and what William says about this very sweet and innocent girl, of course you must have your own way, as you always have; but as for your vows—you know that is quite unnecessary."

"I know no such thing!" said Mr Oswald, imperiously. "You fancy I will forget by and by, and that you may renew this subject again; but I protest to you, Jane, that neither your son nor you shall ever move me on this point—that—"

"George," interrupted his wife, "I hear Hope coming down-stairs; pray do not let her be a party to this discussion. I am reluctant that she should even know how you regard the Buchanans, for Hope is inclined to have an opinion of her own, and to express it more freely perhaps than she should at her years. Let us drop this subject, I beg; I promise you *I* will not renew it."

The cloud passed from the banker's face—his stern mouth relaxed. It was the young voice without, singing so gaily as its owner came bounding down-stairs, "Hame, hame, hame! oh, it's hame fain wad I be—" that chased the mist from his face and from his mind. He was kind enough in all his relationships, if somewhat exacting and rigid; but he was indulgent to an extent, which only the stern and vehement nature can reach, of all the whims and caprices of his favourite child.

Hope Oswald was fourteen, and had been for two or three years at a famous educational establishment in Edinburgh. Her father looked with natural satisfaction on the houses and lands which his industry had acquired, read with satisfaction his own name high in the list of bank shareholders in his own private office; was pleased when he saw "George Oswald, Esq., of Fendie," figuring in his local newspaper as connected with some county or borough reform, or public good-work; but the banker's eye looked never so proud as when a metropolitan broad-sheet informed him how, at the examination of the famed establishment in Edinburgh, "Miss Hope Oswald, Fendie," had carried off prize on prize. The stern man read the half-yearly list of school-girl honours with secret exultation. It was a matter of genuine happy pride to him; and Mrs Oswald smiled within herself, as year after year her husband expressed in joyous terms his wonder, that the name of Miss Adelaide Fendie of Mount Fendie, the daughter of

their aristocratic neighbour "up the water" did never by any chance make its appearance among this honoured number, while "our Hope" had won almost as many distinctions as as there were distinctions to win.

But Hope was weary of gaining prizes, and longed exceedingly to return home; so she was granted an interregnum. Six blithe holiday months were to pass before she returned to Edinburgh, and on this same day she had arrived in Fendie.

The age of awkwardness had scarcely commenced with Hope. She had not begun to be self-conscious, and in consequence escaped the inevitable physical attendant of that unpleasant mental state. She did not yet think of people seeing her when she danced about through the rooms and passages, and ran races in the garden, and waded secretly in the water; nor of people hearing her, as she went about everywhere, singing aloud in the exuberance of her joy. She was only a girl yet: she scarcely felt the budding woman begin to stir within her healthful breast.

So the dining-room door swung open, wider than it needed to do, and Hope came in with a bound. She had hazel eyes and auburn hair, and an animated blithe face, whose claims to beauty, if it had any, no one ever thought of deciding. She was tolerably tall and tolerably stout, and exceedingly firm, and active, and vigorous. The "Misses" in Edinburgh whispered among themselves, that Hope had a predilection for masculine games, and was as strong as a boy; but Hope denied the slander stoutly, affirming that its solitary foundation was one unlucky slide, and two or three snowballs, in both of which the stupid and docile Adelaide Fendie, whom no one thought of blaming, was as much implicated as she.

Hope was rather talkative; she had a great deal to say about her Edinburgh experiences, and both the father and the mother were good listeners; the sterner parent however being by far the most indulgent now.

"And what did your friends say when you came away, Hope?" asked Mr Oswald; "was there much lamentation?"

"They were all very sorry," said Hope, "and they all wished they were coming too; only big Miss Mansfield that's going to India, she did not care, for she thinks we are only girls and she's a woman, and she's always speaking about Calcutta—as if anybody was caring for Calcutta!—and little

Mary Wood would hardly let me go, mamma—she wanted to come too. Will you let her come at the vacation, mother?—for when all the rest go away, Mary has to stay with Miss Swinton, because she has no friends.”

“But Miss Swinton is very kind, is she not?” said Mrs Oswald.

“Miss Swinton is always good to everybody,” said Hope promptly, “but when little Mary sees us all going away, and nobody coming for her, she greets—”

“She *greets*, Hope!” said Mr Oswald, holding up his hand in reproof.

“Well, father,” said the brave Hope, “it is a far better word than cries:—cries! as if folk had only cut their finger! and Miss Swinton says our tongue is as good a tongue as the English, and we need not think shame of it.”

Mr Oswald submitted to be defeated, well-pleased and smiling—

“And what does Miss Swinton do at the vacations, Hope?” asked her mother.

“I don’t know, mother; sometimes she stays at home, sometimes she goes away to some of those places that the Glasgow girls are always talking about—Rothesay, or somewhere about the Clyde. She was there with Miss Buchanan last year; and oh, mamma, I had almost forgotten—how is *our* Helen Buchanan? I must go to see her to-day.”

The banker’s brow contracted suddenly. His wife was wary, and a good politician; she took no notice of Hope’s unsuitable inquiry.

“Miss Swinton went to stay with one of the young ladies, did she? does she do that often, Hope?”

“Sometimes, mother; they are all so fond of her—and I don’t think she has ever been in the south country. Perhaps she would come to Fendie, if you were to ask her, mother, and bring little Mary Wood.”

“Well, we shall see,” said Mrs Oswald; “and what about Adelaide Fendie, Hope?”

“Oh, Adelaide Fendie is coming home; the school is not good enough for her; and they’re going to have a governess at Mount Fendie, for her, and Victoria, and little Fred—Poor governess! I am very sorry for her, I am sure, whoever she is. I would far rather keep a school like—”

Mrs Oswald interposed hastily, “Is it some one from Edinburgh, Hope?”

"No, indeed, mamma. Only somebody from England that Mrs Heavieliegh knows; and I almost hope she will be as stupid as they are, for if she is not, they will kill her. I would not live at Mount Fendie for all the world; and no one can teach Adelaide anything, except to do Berlin work, and thump, thump upon the piano."

"Come, Hope, this is too bad," said her smiling father. "I hope you can thump upon the piano to some purpose yourself. We must hear you to-night, you know."

"I don't care about it, father," said Hope; "it is very dreary, except folk will just let me play my own tunes; but then there's these awful waltzes and things, that were never made for anything but people's fingers. Adelaide could play them for days, father; but they make me dizzy; for there's nothing but noise in them."

"I am afraid you are quite giddy enough already, Hope," said Mr Oswald.

"Miss Swinton says I am sensible," said Hope, with offended dignity. "Miss Swinton says she can trust me with the little ones better than Miss Mansfield,—and Miss Mansfield's seventeen!"

The father and mother laughed; but Miss Swinton's testimony to Hope's good sense pleased them nevertheless.

"Adelaide is coming home in a week," said Hope, "and she said the new governess would be at the Mount before her. I am to go up every day, Adelaide says, if you will let me, mother; and I would like to go sometimes, but not so often; and I want to go to Mossgray, to see old Mrs Mense, and the Laird; and up to Friarsford to Maggie Irving, and down to the Waterfoot to see the Flower of Fendie; but first of all—"

"That will do, Hope," said her mother, fearful that the interdicted name might fall from Hope's gay lips again; "but I think you might show us those drawings of yours that you used to write so much about:—you can arrange your visits to-morrow."

"But I want to go into Fendie to-night, mother," urged Hope, "to see—"

"We cannot part with you to-night, Hope," said Mrs Oswald; "and now go and bring your drawings and let your father see them."

Hope obeyed. Mr Oswald began to walk about the room, almost inclined to be angry with his daughter; this

pertinacious attachment to the one person in Fendie whom he tabooed, and the constant recurrence of her name, annoyed him greatly; and the banker had a consciousness that his wife and his son William were much more likely to submit, so far as external action went, to his stern will, than was the much privileged girl-daughter, who appeared fully as much inclined to sway him as he was to sway her, and did it as effectually. The grave and painful constraint with which William curbed a will as strong as his father's, raised in the banker's mind an angry feeling of antagonism; but the frank resistance of Hope was much less easily managed. Mr Oswald began to feel an involuntary "*drither*" as to his success in this part of the contest—a dubious consciousness that Hope might be too many for him.

The exhibition of drawings did not succeed. Hope perceived that there was something wrong, and with eager girlish curiosity could not rest till she had fathomed it. William was strangely grave and taciturn, she thought; she seized the earliest opportunity of questioning him.

By the dining-room fireside, the brother and sister sat in the twilight alone. Hope took advantage of the propitious moment.

"William, is there anything the matter?"

William stirred the fire thoughtfully and sighed. The light threw a gleam upon his face, and made it look very grey and grim, as his sister thought. Hope was not inclined to wait for his tardy answer; she plunged into the middle of the *questio vexata*.

"William, I want to know about Helen Buchanan."

William started.

"Hush, Hope—do not speak of her, I beg."

"Why?" said Hope. "I like her better than anybody else in Fendie: why should I not speak of her?"

There was no point on which Hope and her taciturn brother agreed so perfectly. He smiled a momentary smile, and then answered gravely,—

"Because you do like her better than any one else in Fendie, you must not speak of her, Hope—and especially recollect that her name must not be mentioned before my father, unless you wish to hear her spoken of with anger and disrespect, which I am sure you do not."

CHAPTER II.

If I may not speak, I pray,
All the words I have to say,
Where shall I go hide them?
Nought say I 'gainst words of thine,
Do not listen, father mine—
So you need not chide them.—SONG.

HOPE OSWALD was very much puzzled. She could by no means understand why this perfectly unreasonable interdict should be put upon her free and unfettered speech, and was not in any degree inclined to submit to it. She resolved to be at the bottom of the mystery.

Mr Oswald and William were no sooner fairly lodged in the office the next morning than Hope began her investigation. Mrs Oswald sat sewing again; she had an old-fashioned horror of idleness.

"Mother," said Hope, "I want you to tell me what ails Helen Buchanan?"

"Hush, my dear!" said her mother.

"But why should I hush, mamma? and why am I never to speak about Helen? William told me the very same; and it's too bad—as if you could not trust me!"

"What makes you think there is anything to trust you with, Hope?" said Mrs Oswald.

"Oh, I know—because you will not let me speak, and say always, hush! hush! Mother, do tell me: what is the matter with Helen?—what ails her?"

"Nothing ails her, Hope—she is perfectly well."

Hope became very impatient.

"But you know you don't mean that, mamma; there *is* something wrong; and would it not be better to tell me than to be always saying 'hush!'"

Mrs Oswald smiled.

"It is not always so easy to tell, Hope:—for instance, why do you call me 'mamma' one moment, and 'mother' the next?"

"Oh, that is easy," said Hope; "because the girls at school say mamma, and it sounds best there; and when I come

home, William says mother, and it is home-like and—and the right word; but I forget sometimes, and mix them at first. So now, mother, if you please, tell me about Helen Buchanan."

"You are a very pertinacious girl," said Mrs Oswald; "but remember, Hope, if I tell you this, that you must be very prudent and sensible, and never mention it again."

"I will be very prudent and sensible, mother," promised Hope, with a reservation.

Mrs Oswald hesitated still: the impatient Hope volunteered to thread her mother's refractory needle, and urged her petition still more warmly. A slight fugitive smile crossed the good mother's face—then she became very grave.

"Helen's father died long ago; he used to be very fond of you when you were a baby, Hope; but you cannot remember him."

"Oh, yes! was he not very thin and pale, mother, with a white high forehead, like Mossgray?—I do mind him."

"Hush, Hope! you are interrupting me now. He was a very delicate, gentle man, this poor Mr Buchanan; but he was not at all like Mossgray, and when he died, your father and he were not good friends."

"Yes, mother, I know that," said the disappointed Hope; "but is that all?"

"Wait a little; do not be so impatient!" said Mrs Oswald. "And foolish people said that your father's sternness killed this delicate man. I believe Mrs Buchanan thinks so still."

Hope started.

"Then Helen will not be friends with us because my father was poor Mr Buchanan's enemy:—is that it, mother?"

"No, Hope, that is not it. Helen knows that her father was a weak man, and Helen is a wise, good girl, and would not do anything so foolish; but Helen is only a poor school-mistress, Hope, and your brother William, you know, will be rich."

"Oh, mamma!" exclaimed Hope, clapping her hands as the conjunction of these two names threw sudden light upon the mystery, "are they going to be married?"

"I very much fear you are not the sensible person you call yourself," said her mother; "your father will not let them be married, Hope."

Hope's bright face became suddenly blank.

"Mother, there is nobody like Helen Buchanan in all Fendie! why will my father not let them be married?"

"Because her father did him wrong, Hope; and because she is poor."

"Because she is poor!—Helen is a gentlewoman, mother!—and because her father did wrong! But that is not Helen's fault. If my father did wrong, no one would blame William or me."

"Take care, Hope; you are treading on dangerous ground," said Mrs Oswald; "and though it is not Helen's fault, your father has made up his mind, and William must submit."

"But, mother," said Hope doubtfully, "William is old—William is a man."

"And what then?"

"I don't know," said Hope, hesitating; "perhaps it would be quite wrong, but—mother, is William always to do what my father bids him?"

"And why should he not, Hope?" said Mrs Oswald; "does it alter his duty that he is old?"

"I don't know, mother," said Hope again; "but if my grandfather were living now, my father would not always ask him before he did anything, as I ask you; and perhaps William is right, and perhaps—mother, what would my father do if William disobeyed him?"

"I believe he would never speak to him again," said Mrs Oswald.

Hope shrank back and looked afraid.

"And all that he has, Hope, he would take from William and give to you."

"To me, mother? that would not do William any harm," said Hope, looking up brightly; "though if my father would not *spe*ak to him—but he would, mother—he could not help it."

"My dear, I have known your father longer than you have," said Mrs Oswald; "and besides, Hope, Helen Buchanan would not consent if your father did not consent; she is as firm as he is."

"Then it is all because everybody is proud, mother," said Hope, turning away disconsolately, "and would rather make other folk unhappy than give up their own will."

"There are some things in the world, Hope," said Mrs

Oswald, "that are of more importance than even making people happy."

"I know, mother," said Hope: "it is best to be *right* always, whether we are happy or not; but this is not right, I am sure—my father does not know—there is nobody in Fendie like Helen Buchanan!"

Mrs Oswald sighed.

"You must not speak so of your father, Hope, he knows what is right better than you do."

Hope looked sceptical; those frank instinctive impulses of the young heart, which had no complicated mesh of secret motives to hinder its prompt out-going, were perhaps better guides after all than the groping, worldly wisdom of elder minds; wisdom whose wary steps are supposed to be guided by the caution of clear-sightedness, when it is only the timid caution of the blind.

"But I may go to see Helen Buchanan, may I not, mother?" asked Hope, after a pause.

"Surely, Hope; I have no wish to restrain you, and your father will not, I dare say, unless you speak of her again before him, as you did yesterday; and you must be cautious of that, for it only aggravates your father's prejudice and vexes William, without doing any good."

"And am I not to speak about Helen at all?" said Hope.

"No, my dear, not now. I do not forbid you praising Helen as frankly as you blame Adelaide Fendie—and you must restrain that last propensity of yours a little, Hope—but do it cautiously and warily, and let me see something of this wisdom and good sense which Miss Swinton has discovered. You see I trust you, Hope."

Hope drew herself up.

"I will be very careful, mother, no fear, but may I go to see Helen now?"

"Helen will be busy now, Hope."

"Well, then, come to the Waterside, mother; I want to see Mossgray, and I want to see Maggie Irving. Come!"

The indulgent mother laid aside her work and went.

Friarsford was a farm-house standing on a little eminence at some distance from the Water, and Maggie Irving was the farmer's daughter. She was a year older than Hope Oswald, and one of her Fendie intimates. The house was only a little out of the direct road to Mossgray, and Mrs

Oswald and her daughter turned up the winding by-way to make their first visit there.

Matthew Irving of Friarsford was wealthy and had some ambition. He was exceedingly desirous to give his children good education, and with the masculine part of them he had succeeded tolerably well, thanks to the academy of Fendie; but the hapless Maggie was less fortunate. She was the only daughter; especial pains, and care, and labour had been expended upon her training, and the father and mother, exulting over their accomplished girl, thought the process a perfectly satisfactory and successful one.

Maggie had been sent to the house of a relative in one of the busy towns of Lancashire to learn English, and she had learnt it to perfection. Maggie had a piano, and could play you against time, all manner of inarticulate music. Maggie could draw, as three or four copies made from French lithographs—*patterns*, as Maggie and her mother called them—hung there, elaborately framed, upon the walls, to testify.

Moreover, Hope Oswald's quick movements had swept upon the ground a couple of handsome specimens of knitting, displayed upon the arm and cushions of the sofa, before Hope had been ten minutes in the lightsome cheerful apartment, which was the comfortable parlour once, but had now obtained brevet rank as drawing-room. As Maggie hastened to arrange them, she pointed out the stitch to her visitor, and offered to show her the various stock she had. Hope was dismayed; never girl of fourteen was more innocent of stitches than she, and this branch of her friend's acquirements had very little interest for her. It was not so with Mrs Irving, a comfortable, kindly, vulgar woman, who was very proud of her daughter's accomplishments, and eager to exhibit them.

"Miss Hope will give you a tune, Maggie," she said; "and you can let her hear how you come on yoursell. She's very good at it, Mrs Oswald, though she hasna had the same advantages as Miss Hope."

Hope started in alarm.

"Oh, don't let us have any music, Mrs Irving!—I mean, I shall be very glad to hear Maggie, but I don't like playing."

Mrs Irving thought the young lady only coy.

"Hout, Miss Hope! a'budy that's very good at it makes that excuse, ye ken; and I'm sure ye must aye be getting new tunes in Edinburgh."

"But I don't like new tunes," pleaded Hope.

"Oh, Miss Oswald!" said the astonished Maggie, in gentle reproof.

Hope was offended; Maggie Irving called her Miss Oswald; Maggie Irving had nothing to talk about, after so long a separation, but stitches and new tunes! Their friendship was at an end. Hope walked indignantly to the piano, and played her favourite air of "Hame, hame, hame!"

"It's a bonnie bit simple thing that," said Mrs Irving, looking proudly at her own accomplished performer, as she took her place at the instrument, by the side of which Hope and her mother were reluctantly compelled to sit for a dull half hour, listening to jingling pieces of music, whose brief moment of fashion was long ago over, and which had never had anything but fashion to recommend them.

But Mrs Irving was delighted, and Maggie was exceedingly complacent. Alas, poor Maggie! her fingers were highly educated; her mind was fallow. The thorough training of Hope's Edinburgh school these good folk in Fendie could not reach; but they could reach the superficials, and they were contented.

"Well, Hope," said Mrs Oswald, in answer to a burst of wonder and disappointment, when they had left Friarsford and its accomplishments behind them; "you remember how you used to resist and be disobedient when your father said that Matthew Irving's daughter was no companion for you."

"But, mother," said Hope solemnly, "Adelaide Fendie is just the same—and Adelaide ought to be a lady, if being anybody's daughter would make her one; but she is not, for all that."

"Adelaide is only a girl like yourself, Hope."

"But she is not a gentlewoman, mamma; and she talks about stitches and tunes like Maggie Irving—and I'm sure I don't know what's the use of them."

Hope could not forget her disappointment; there was only one consolation in it. In the midst of all these twinkling artificial lights, the star of Helen Buchanan rose clearer and clearer. Helen was a gentlewoman; and what did it matter that she was poor?

"Yonder is Mossgray!" exclaimed Hope, as they approached the house; "yonder he is, up among the trees, and he has got something like a letter in his hand. Do you see him, mother?"

The bank of the wan Water sloped upward into gentle braes, a little beyond the house of Mossgray, and the laird was certainly there, walking among the trees, with a step altogether unlike his usual meditative, slow pace. Hope Oswald was an especial favourite with Mr Graeme of Mossgray, and he liked her mother; but Mrs Oswald had too much regard and sympathy for the old man to intrude on his retirement.

"We will go in and see Mrs Mense, Hope," she said; "Mossgray seems occupied just now. You will see him another day."

The large old-fashioned kitchen had a separate entrance to itself. The mass of buildings altogether bore evident testimony to the different periods of their erection, and looked, as their owner said, a natural growth of the home-soil in which the grey walls and rude, dark, massy tower seemed so firmly rooted. A large garden descended from the most modern front of the house to the water, where it was deeply fringed with willows. The clipt, fantastic trees of a generation which admired such clumsy gambols of art were scattered through it, and there was a sun-dial, and many prim flower-beds; but the cherished lilies of Mossgray were not in these stiffly-angled enclosures; their fresh green leaves were beginning to shoot up in the freer borders—those borders on which they gleamed in the dim summer evenings, like errant rays of the moon.

Mrs Mense was a very old woman now, and invalided. She sat in a great elbow-chair by the fireside, spinning feebly sometimes, and sometimes giving counsel, by no means feebly, to her self-willed niece, the housekeeper *de facto*. The establishment was a very limited one; besides Janet, and the miscellaneous personage known as "Mossgray's man," there was only one other servant in the house.

"Eh, Miss Hope, is this you?" said Mrs Mense, "and your mamma nae less, minding the auld wife as she aye does. Effie, ye tawpie, get chairs to the ladies—or are ye gaun ben, Mrs Oswald, to wait for Mossgray?"

"Mossgray is out, I see," said Mrs Oswald. "No, Hope came to see you, Mrs Mense; we will sit down beside you awhile. That will do, Effie."

"And look till her how she's grown!" exclaimed the old woman, and "stout wi't. Ye'renogaun to let down our credit, Miss Hope. Ye'll let the Edinburgh folk see what guid bluid is

in thir southland parts. Effie, gar Janet gie ye the wee cheeny luggie fu' o' cream. Ye mind it, Miss Hope? it belongs mair to you than to onybody about Mossgray."

"But, Mrs Mense," said Hope, "you did not call Crummie's calf after me, as you said you would."

"My dear lamb! ye wadna have had me to ca' the muckle langleggit haverel of a beast after you, and you a winsome young lady? Na, I ken better manners—and forbye Mossgray said it was nae compliment. But I'll tell ye what, Miss Hope, there's a new powny—the bonniest creature!—and ye'se get the naming o't, gin ye like."

"Where is it?—wait till I see it, mamma!" cried Hope, starting up. Hope had, like most country girls, an especial liking for youthful animals.

"Ye maun hae your cream first," said the housekeeper, as Effie approached with the china luggie, in which, from time immemorial, Hope had received a draught of rich cream on her every visit to Mossgray. Hope hardly took time to taste it; she was too eager to see the "new powny."

"Did you see the laird, Mem?" said Mrs Mense, with some appearance of anxiety, as Mrs Oswald waited for her daughter's return.

"We saw him on the knowe," said Mrs Oswald; "but did not disturb him, as he seemed occupied. I fancy that is one of his favourite spots, Mrs Mense."

"Na—I'm meaning I dinna ken," said the old woman; "but he's gotten some letter the day that's troubled him—I canna bide to see him fashed, and he's just unco easy putten about. Janet, div ye hear the clock? it's twa chappit, and the dinner no to the fire!"

"I ken what I'm doing, auntie," returned the impatient Janet.

"Ye dinna ken onything very wise then," said the de-throned monarch of the kitchen; "it's a bonnie-like thing that the laird, honest man, maun wait for his dinner, aboon a' the rest o' his troubles! I heard him travelling up and down in his ain study-room in the tower, after thae weary letters came in. What gars folk write when they've naething but ill-tidings to tell about, I wad like to ken? and syne out to the Waterside as he aye does when he's troubled—I canna bide, as I was saying, to see him fashed, for—"

"Oh, Mrs Mense!" exclaimed Hope, bounding in, "be sure and tell Mossgray that he is not to call the pony any-

thing till I come back again. Mamma, come and see it; it's like as if its coat was all sprinkled with snow—I think I will call it Spunkie; but that's not a bonnie name. Mind, Mrs Mense, that nobody is to give it its name but me."

Mrs Mense promised, and after some further lamentation about her master's supposed trouble, resumed so keenly the dinner controversy with Janet, that her visitors withdrew. It was yet too early to visit Helen Buchanan, so Hope, expatiating on the beauty of the pony, returned with her mother, home.

CHAPTER III.

Oh, youth! for years so many and sweet
 'Tis known that thou and I were one;
 I'll think it but a fond deceit—
 It cannot be that thou art gone;
 Thy vesper-bell hath not yet tolled,
 And thou wert aye a masquer bold;
 What strange disguise hast now put on
 To make believe that thou art gone?
 I see these locks in silvery slips,
 This drooping gait, this altered size;
 But spring-tide blossoms on thy lips,
 And tears take sunshine from thine eyes!
 Life is but thought; so think I will
 That youth and I are housemates still.—COLERIDGE.

THE Laird of Mossgray stood alone beneath a high beech, whose silvery trunk and delicate buds made it the most noticeable of all the neighbouring trees. His figure was tall, thin, and stooping; his hair the most delicate silvery gray; his face full of thoughtful fortitude and wisdom in its gentlest guise; but his usual serenity was ruffled to-day, the calm of his meditative age was broken.

Those dim lands of memory in whose gentle twilight he did so much love to wander, among the fairy shadows, tender and pensive, of things which once were stern and hard enough, had been suddenly illuminated by a flash of the intense and present reality which once they had. The old man's quietness had suddenly been rent asunder, and floated

away from him like a mist, while the stormy blood of his more vehement days was swelling in his veins again.

He held a letter in his hand ; the fingers which traced its trembling lines were now lying in a nameless grave. A worn-out, wearied woman, prematurely old, and glad to lay down her head in that one place where the weary are at rest, was the writer of those earnest, living words. The Laird of Mossgray did not remember that she was old—the past years were in this moment a fable and a dream to him. He thought of Liliās only as he saw her last, enshrined in all the pure and gentle dignity of his young fancies ; for Liliās was dead.

And dying, she had revealed to the old man what she was. Not indeed the lofty lady of his dreaming days, but a gentle, chastened, meek woman, who knew now, and had long known, the worth of the generous heart she threw away. In the bitterness of his soul he had believed her an unsubstantial vision ; but the faithful hand of death had brought back to him the true Liliās, worthy of the place he had given her in his best days.

“ I do not ask you to forgive me,” wrote the dying Liliās, “ because I know that long ago you must have forgiven the witless girl’s heart that did itself so much more wrong than you. I did not know myself, my own slight, shallow, girlish self, and pardon me then, Adam Graeme, that I did not know you. Since then I have learned—what have I not learned that is bitter and sorrowful ? Care, poverty, death, and miserable shames and humiliations, such as never crossed your path, have been the constant companions of mine : they are all ending now. I am going hence to my Lord, and to the children whom He took from me one by one, till my heart was well-nigh broken ; but I cannot go till I make one prayer to you, one last entreaty for the sake of our youth.

“ I would not speak of the time when we last met ; in pity to my bitter lot, and to the dead whose faults we lay with them in the grave to be forgotten, as I have laid Edward, and as stranger hands shall soon lay me, do not think of that time. I have one last treasure remaining to me, one last request to make, and there is no one in the world but you, whom I have wronged, to whom I can address my prayer.

“ Mossgray, I have a child ; a friendless, unprotected,

solitary girl, who will soon be left utterly alone. If I shrink from subjecting her to the cold charity of Walter's wife, forgive me, because I am her mother. I know that Liliás is not what I was. I know that our subdued and clouded life has given to her youth a greater maturity than I had when I was her mother. I have fancied often that Liliás *is* what you thought me to be, and there has been a sad pleasure in the hope, that for her weak mother's sake, your heart would melt to my child.

"I cannot ask you. I feel that I cannot venture to beg of you this last service; my heart fails me, when I remember how little I deserve any grace at your hands. But you who have always been so kind and pitiful, think of the misery of leaving her thus, alone in an evil world. If you think I presume upon you, if you refuse to hear my prayer, I still must plead it for her sake. Adam Graeme, will you protect my Liliás? Will you forgive the sins we have done against you, and protect our child?"

There was more than this; there were the solemn farewells of the dying, the pathetic earnestness of sorrowful repentance which bade God bless him for ever. Except in his gray hairs, and in the strength which began gently to fail and glide away, Adam Graeme was not old. The tide of his strong and ardent feelings rushed back in that mighty revulsion, with which the generous soul repents when it has blamed unjustly. He remembered no injury Liliás had done him—he forgot the blight of his youth, the solitude of his old age; he only felt that she *was* again, the Liliás of his early dreams; and that the commands she laid upon him were sacred and holy, a trust dearer than any other thing on earth.

And yet, a few brief days before, the old man had solemnly recorded his resolution to shun their presence; to avoid all contact with Liliás and her child, that the peace of his age might not be broken. Their very name was pain to him; therefore he prayed that he might not cross their path. He resolved to keep himself from any, the most distant intercourse with them. In solemn earnest he formed this purpose, or rather he formed it not: it was the instinctive necessity of his heart.

He remembered it now no more. It was not that he combated his former resolution; it was swept away before the resistless force of that impulsive, generous heart, which in its

solitary pain had built this barrier about itself; and there was no inconsistency here. Had his ear been dull to the voice of Liliass, had he hesitated to respond to her appeal, then had Adam Graeme in his old age ceased to be consistent to himself; for the same power which made him resolve to keep himself separate and distant always from those whose very names had might enough to move him still, asserted itself in the instant return of all the ancient tenderness and honour, which painfully taken away from the living Liliass, could flow forth unrestrained and unblamed upon the dead.

In the enclosure of the letter, a trembling hand had written the date of the first Liliass's death. It struck with a dull pang the heart to which she was restored, yet only thus, he knew, could he have regained her.

That evening the Laird of Mossgray set out on a lonely journey. Before his going, he warned his anxious housekeeper of the young guest he might probably bring home with him. The intimation occasioned considerable excitement in the little household.

The early twilight of the April night had fallen, when Adam Graeme left the dim lights of Fendie behind him, and travelled away into the darkness, shaping his course to the south. The faint indefinite sounds, and musical "tingling silentness" of the night, came close about him, like the touch of angels' wings. The stars were shining here and there through the soft clouds of spring, and the dim shadowy sky blended its line yonder, in the distance, so gently with the darkened earth, that you could not mark the place of their meeting. The moon herself had been an intruder there; the subdued and pensive dimness which told of that nightly weeping of the heavens from which the young spring draws its freshness and its life, and the faint shining of yon solitary stars high in the veiled firmament, harmonized most meetly with the lonely spirit of the traveller, going forth to look upon the grave of his dead. The sad, wistful, yearning melancholy which belongs to this hour "between the night and the day," who does not know—those faint hushed hopes, those inarticulate aspirations, turning then, when there is dimness on the earth, to the better something beyond—there are few who have not felt the influence of "the holy time."

A charmed sway it had borne at all times over the mind of Adam Graeme. And now it travelled with him like a

human friend: in the stillness of his night journey there were gentle ministrations about him, influences of the earth and of the sky.

CHAPTER IV.

Touch the chords gently—
Those strings are heart-strings, and the sounds they utter—
Be silent when you hear them—are the groanings
Of uttermost pain, the sighings of great sorrow,
Voices from out the depths.—ANON.

ABOUT twelve or thirteen years before the date of our last chapters, a young man from Glasgow, with his wife and one child, came as lodgers to a humble road-side cottage not far from the town of Fendie, and very near the Waterside. Walter Buchanan was an invalid. A delicate, sensitive man by nature, whose fine nervous organization was of that kind which is akin to weakness and not to strength—for there are both varieties—his health had been broken by the confinement and harassing labour of his vocation as a clerk in a mercantile office. His wife had a little portion, a very little one, which nevertheless to their inexperienced eyes seemed able to last long and accomplish much; so on the strength of it, and in obedience to the doctor's peremptory order, that he should have rest and country air, Walter gave up his situation, and the young couple began to make the dangerous experiment of living upon their little capital. The gentle poetic man had been charmed in his early days, in some chance visit to the neighbourhood, by the stately water and pretty town of Fendie, and the pleasant remembrance decided their new habitation.

These rash, youthful folk were more fortunate than prudent people might think they deserved. They excited the interest and kindly sympathy of Mrs Oswald, the banker's wife, and through her, of her sterner husband; so that when the pleasant summer air had done its gentle spiriting on the wan cheek of Walter Buchanan, and he felt himself able for work again—which was happily before his wife's little portion was altogether exhausted—he was received into the bank as Mr Oswald's clerk.

To be called "of the bank," in a country town in Scotland, is a matter of considerable dignity, and the salary, if small, was enough for their limited expenses. The Oswalds were kind and neighbourly; other friends gathered about the gentle couple; and as they stood in their own garden beneath the heavy branches of their own fruit-trees, in those serene autumnal evenings, watching the sun go down gloriously behind the dark crest of yonder hill, they were wont to render quiet thanksgiving out of full hearts.

This pleasant life continued through ten happy years, and in its placid course the delicate man seemed strengthened in mind no less than in body. His nervous melancholy glided away into graceful mists of pensive thought. The nervous impatience and irritability, which it had once cost him so much pains to subdue, were soothed and softened. He became, mentally no less than physically, as it seemed, a more healthful and a stronger man.

At the end of the ten years his position was changed. They had saved enough to raise their little capital to a larger amount than the original sum on which their inexperience had braved the evils of the world. This was invested in the purchase of bank shares, and Walter Buchanan, a clerk no longer, became Mr Oswald's partner in the agency of the bank.

An unhappy change. The one peculiar, distinguishing feature of the Scottish banking system, over which our economists boast themselves, became a source of constant torment to Walter Buchanan. The quick and prompt decisions of Oswald, in which he could not join, made him feel his own weaker will overborne and set aside. A hundred "peculiar cases," and "very peculiar cases," in which the clear, acute mind of the banker could see no peculiarity at all, troubled the midnight rest of his nervous and tender-hearted partner. That this struggling man whose security was dubious, or that hapless farmer wading knee-deep in difficulties, whose cash account was already overdrawn, and who wanted more, should be dealt with summarily, was clear to Oswald's steady eye; but was enveloped in painful mists of distress and perplexity to Walter Buchanan, himself acquainted with all the restless shifts and expedients of the struggling poor.

His feelings became morbid again under that exercise. He imagined himself ill-used, despised, trampled upon, when the finer points of his compassionate and impulsive bene-

violence came into collision with the strong sense and energy of his partner, who in his turn grew impatient of the sentiment which he thought sickly, and the tenderness which he called weak. There was a rupture at last. A struggling man with dubious security came to Buchanan when Oswald was absent from Fendie. The sensitive man of feeling forgot prudence in compassion, and by his ill-judged acceptance of the uncertain "cautioner," brought serious loss to the bank. Oswald returned; there were sharp and high words spoken by both, which neither, in less excited mood, would have given utterance to; and in a storm of bitter anger and wounded to the very heart, Walter Buchanan threw up his situation, dissolved his partnership with Oswald, and left the bank.

Very soon to leave the world; for, before the winter was over, his course had ended. He could not bear such tempests of excitement, for pain to him was agony, and anger madness. So in his weakness he died, and left his gentle widow and his young daughter to fight with the world alone.

Helen Buchanan was only sixteen. She had a fair proportion of what people call accomplishments, and might almost have been a governess in a boarding-school or a "gentleman's family;" and beneath the accomplishments there was a sound substratum of education, and a mind matured too early for her own happiness. Fendie was abundantly supplied with *ladies'* schools; so Helen, in her flush of youthful pride and independence, determined to offer her services to the humbler mothers, and to receive as her pupils not the young ladies, but the little girls of Fendie.

Mrs Buchanan reluctantly acquiesced. She was a gentle, hopeful woman, accustomed to yield always to the quick impulses and keen feelings of her husband, and now rendering a kindred submission to her daughter. Helen was a very dutiful, very loving child, but her mother's cheerful, patient nature was made to be thus influenced, and unconsciously and involuntarily the stronger spirit bore the mastery.

So when the first pangs of their grief were over, Mrs Buchanan regretfully removed her substantial furniture from the dining-room of which she had been once so proud, and with many sighs saw her little maid-servant arrange in it the bare benches and large work-table which befitted its new character of school-room; and the youthful teacher began her labours.

These had gone on successfully for four or five years before the pleasant April-tide on which Hope Oswald returned home; eventful years to Helen. It is not well to leave the unconscious happiness of girlhood too soon, even to enter upon the enchanted ground of youth. Toil, poverty, and William Oswald; the three together were well nigh too many for the youthful champion who had to struggle, single-handed, against them all.

In the twilight of that April evening she sat in their little parlour alone. The faint firelight gave a wavering flush to the shadowy air of the holy time; and Helen sat in the recess of the window, wandering through the mazes of such a reverie, as belongs especially to her peculiar temperament and mind. For those delicate lines in her face, those continually moving features, those slight starts now and then, and altogether the elastic impulsive energy and life which you could perceive in her figure even in its repose, testified her inheritance of the constitution of her father. With one difference. *His* nervous, sensitive temperament was akin to weakness; hers, with all its expressive grace, its swift instinctive feelings, its constant life and motion, was strong—strong to endure, although its pain was sorer a thousand times than that of more passive natures—strong to struggle—mighty to enjoy.

She had been out, watching the sun as he shed a golden mist over the dark mass of yonder hill, where it stands out boldly into the Firth, a strong sentinel, keeping watch upon the sea; gleaming in the mid-waters of the estuary, gleaming in the wet sand and shining pools of the deep bay, and throwing out the sunless hillock at the river's mouth, with its little tower and quiet houses, in bold relief against the far away mountain, and its mantle of streaming gold. The wonderful sky in the west, the broad bed of the Firth, the sunset and its noble scene—there was an enjoyment in these to the delicate soul of Helen, which duller natures have not in the greatest personal blessings of the world.

And now, with her pale cheek resting on her hand, and leaning forward on the window-sill, Helen was lost in a reverie. What was it? only a mist of fair thoughts indefinitely woven together; scenes starting up here and there of the future and of the past, with fairy links of association drawing their strangely-varied band together; old stories, old songs, and

breath of music floating through all in gentle caprice—the sweet and pleasant gloaming of the mind.

Mrs Buchanan was out, doing some household business in Fendie, and Helen did not hear the footstep of Hope Oswald as she entered by the garden gate. These quiet houses are innocently insecure; when Hope's summons remained unanswered, she opened the door herself, and went in.

"Oh, Helen!" exclaimed Hope, as she precipitated herself upon her friend, dispersing in that nervous start all the fair visions of the evening dream. "How glad I am to be home again—how glad I am to see you!—but I scarcely can see you either, because it's quite dark; and, Helen—you don't know how I used to weary in Edinburgh just to hear you speak again!"

"Thank you, Hope," said Helen. "I am very glad to see you; or rather to hear you speak, according to your own sensible distinction. Come, we will get a light and look at each other."

Mingling with the quick movement of surprise at first, there had been a deep blush and a temporary shrinking from William Oswald's sister; but another moment restored Hope to her old privileged place of favourite, and Helen rose, her young companion's eager arms clinging about her waist, to light the one candle on the little table.

The room was small and plainly furnished, though its substantial mahogany chairs and sofa looked respectable in their declining years. On the carpet here and there were various spots of darning artistically done, which rather improved its appearance than otherwise. A large work-basket stood upon the table containing many miscellaneous pieces of sewing; shirts in every stage of progress, narrow strips of muslin, bearing marks of the painful initiation of very little pupils into the mysteries of the thoughtful craft, mingled here and there with scraps of humble "fancy" work, samplers, and the like—all of which the young school-mistress had to arrange and set to rights before the work of to-morrow commenced. A book lay beside the basket—a well-thumbed book from the library. Helen had been idling; for she sometimes did snatch the brief relaxation of a novel, though Maxwell Dickson, the librarian, had no great choice of literature.

"Oh, Helen," exclaimed Hope again, when the feeble light of the candle revealed to her the pale face of her friend, "I am so very glad to see you again!"

"Thank you, Hope," repeated Helen; "how you are growing—you will be above us all by and by. When did you come home?"

"Only yesterday," said Hope; "but are you sure you are quite well, Helen?"

"Quite sure—why?"

"Only because you look pale—paler than you used to do; and, Helen, what makes you sigh?"

"Did I sigh?" said Helen, her delicate wavering colour gradually heightening beneath the girl's steady affectionate look. "I did not know of it, Hope—it must have been for nothing, you know, when I was not aware of it."

"Ah, but it was when you were sitting in the dark before you saw me," said Hope gravely, "and you must have been thinking of something."

Helen's colour heightened more and more, yet she smiled.

"Are you going to be an inquisitor, Hope? Do you know people sometimes think very deeply, as you saw me to-night, about nothing? Ah, you shake your head and are very grave and wise, and experienced, I see. Come, I will show you what Cowper says about it."

"Oh, I know," said Hope. "I learned all that for Miss Swinton because she likes Cowper; but, Helen, you are not so clever as one of our young ladies; it's Miss Mansfield, you know, that's going to Calcutta, and she's old—she is near eighteen, I am sure—and she sighs; but when Miss Swinton spoke to her about it, she said she was only drawing a long breath. I think," said Hope disconsolately, "that the people in Fendie are very dull and sad now; for everybody draws long breaths."

"Have you seen so many, Hope?" said Helen, with an uneasy flush upon her face, and with some evident interest in the question; those constantly moving features were sad tell-tales.

"I mean just the people I care about," said Hope; "there is poor William. I do not know what ails William—for he sat in the dark like you, last night, and will always lean his head upon his hands, and sigh—sigh—and my mother—I wish you would not all be so sad."

Helen Buchanan turned round to examine the contents of her work-basket. Her slender figure was very slightly drawn up; something almost imperceptible like the faint touch of

wind upon leaves passed over her; you could not tell what it was, though you could read its swift expression as clearly as written words. Pride—sympathy—a consciousness that moved her heart and yet made it firmer; but Hope's piece of incidental information did not sadden the face of Helen.

Hope had a comprehension of—though she could by no means have explained how she comprehended—the silent language of Helen Buchanan's looks and motions; and she arrived at a pretty accurate conclusion in her own simple and shrewd reasonings on the subject. Mrs Buchanan came in so soon that she could try no further experiments with Helen; but as she past through the dim road, half-street, half-lane, in which their house stood, and came into the quiet Main Street of Fendie, with its half-shut shops and groups of wayside talkers, great schemes began to germinate within the small head of Hope Oswald. If only that very unreasonable opposition of her father's could be overcome, Hope decided that William would be condemned to draw long breaths in the dark no longer. "Miss Swinton says I am sensible," mused Hope within herself, "and my father says I am clever. I don't know—I think it will turn out the right way some time, and we shall all be very happy, but just now—I will try!"

And immediately there flitted before the eyes of Hope, in the gentle darkness of the April night, a fairy appearance, we do not venture to say it was anything very ethereal. It was only a vision of a lilac satin frock like that famous one which Miss Adelaide Fendie, of Mount Fendie, wore at her sister's marriage, and very fascinating was the gleam which it shed about the young schemer as she lingered at her father's door. Hope Oswald was only fourteen.

CHAPTER V.

We must at first endure
The simple woe of knowing they are dead—
A soul-sick woe in which no comfort is—
And wish we were beside them in the dust !
That anguish dire cannot sustain itself,
But settles down into a grief that loves,
And finds relief in unreprieved tears.
Then cometh sorrow, like a Sabbath ! Heaven
Sends resignation down and faith ; and last
Of all there falls a kind oblivion
Over the going out of that sweet light
In which we had our being.—PROFESSOR WILSON.

IN the waning afternoon of another dim spring day the Laird of Mossgray entered the Cumberland valley, to which the letter of Lilius had directed him.

He had traversed the fair country beyond Carlisle, with its sloping glades, and belts of rich woodland, and now had reached a chiller and more hilly region, whose bleak inhospitable fells, still scarcely touched by the breath of spring, did yet reveal home-like glimpses, here and there, of sheltered glens and quiet houses, dwelling alone among the hills. He had to pass several of the pleasant towns of Cumberland before he reached the sequestered hamlet in which the last days of Lilius had been spent. It lay in a nook by itself, a scanty congregation of gray roofs, with the church "a gracious lady," as was the poet's church among the hills, serenely overlooking all, reigning over the living and the dead. From the end of the little glen you commanded the long range of a wider and more important valley, at the further end of which lay one of the most picturesque of those northern towns, its gray limestone buildings making a sheen in the distance, and a delicate cloud of smoke hovering about the points of its white spires, like something spiritual, marking where household hearths were gathered together in social amity. Not far away lay the consecrated country of the lakes : and everywhere around, bare, brown, scathed hill-tops stood out against the sky.

Mossgray proceeded to the churchyard first of all ; all

things beside were strange to him in the unknown village, but here he had a friend. After long search among the gray memorials of the forefathers of the hamlet, he came upon a green mound marked by no name, where the soft, green turf was faintly specked with the fragile blue of the forget-me-not; in the village churchyard this alone and the daisy found a place—occupants more fit than the garish flowers with which modern taste has peopled the cities of the dead. The Laird of Mossgray turned aside to ask the name of the occupant of this grave. It was a Scottish widow—said the sexton—lately dead, whose name was Maxwell. The inquirer returned again, and seating himself on a hillock, covered his face with his hands. The old man never knew how long he lingered there. He was not an old man then; the fervid affection of his youth—the burning grief of his early trial, were in his heart passionate and strong as when they thrilled it first; and it was not until the night fell and the dew dropped gently on him, that the sacred sorrow which belongs to the dead, came down to still the stronger throbs of his solitary heart. When he looked up, the stars were shining again in the dim and dewy sky—the hills stood up, like watching Titans, clothed in the shadowy unformed garments of the early earth, and ghost-like in the darkness rose ancient tombstones, gray with years, and the green mounds of yesterday. The great, silent, conscious world, tingling with the spiritual presence which over-brimmed its mighty precincts—and the dead—the solemn sleepers who have lived, and do but wait to live again.

But there were the faint village lights close at hand, and the orphan to be sought for there, who was committed to his care. So the old man withdrew from the grave of Lilies, to seek her child.

The bearing of the Laird of Mossgray had in it so much of the graceful olden courtesy of the gentleman born, that it never failed to bring deference and attention. The very little inn which stood in the centre of the hamlet was not much frequented by strangers. Wandering pedestrian tourists of the student or artist class, to whom its humbleness was a recommendation, did sometimes refresh themselves in its well-sanded kitchen; but the ruddy landlady had scarcely ever welcomed such a guest as Mossgray under her homely roof. So she ushered him into a little boarded room, of dignity superior to the kitchen, though communicating with it, and

dusted a huge old-fashioned chair with her apron, and stood curtsying before him, waiting for his orders, and secretly cogitating whether there would be time to dress a fowl for supper, or if the universal ham and eggs would do.

But Mossgray was by no means concerned about supper. He was silent for a few moments, during which the comfortable hostess stood before him marvelling, and when he did address her, it was to ask whether she knew a young Scottish lady, a Miss Maxwell, who, he believed, lived in the village.

The good landlady was a little shocked. What had the like of him to do with young ladies? but his grave face reassured her.

"And that will be the poor young creature that lost her mother, a fortnight come Friday, it's like?"

"Yes," said Mossgray, slowly, to steady his voice, "yes, she is an orphan—her mother is dead."

"Ay, sure; and I wouldn't wonder a bit," said the stout hostess, smoothing down her ample skirts, "if she didn't bide long behind her; for a thin long slip of a thing she is, and no more red on her cheek than the very snow, and I've heard say that such like troubles run in the blood. There's the Squire's family down in the dale—you'll know them sure, better than the likes of me—they've all followed one another, for all the world like a march of folk at a funeral going to the grave."

"And is Liliās—is the young lady affected with this disease?" exclaimed Mossgray.

"The young lady did you say, Sir? Why, the poor girl had her bread to work for, like the rest on us—and a weakly white thing she was if there were ne'er another; but she thought herself a young lady sure enow, and what mun she do but go and be a governess, as they ca' it. Her mother was a prideful body, to have nothing, and so was Miss; but I say, I'd sooner have my girl a dairy-maid any day, if Susan needed to go out of her father's house for a living, which she doesn't, thank Providence."

"But, my good woman," said Mossgray mildly, "Miss Maxwell has no intention of being a governess, I trust, as she has no need. You will oblige me if you can tell me where I shall find her."

"Well, and that's just more than I can tell you, Sir; for the Rector's gone from home, and they say Miss went with them;—but if it's your pleasure to stay—"

"I will stay this night, if you can accommodate me," was the answer.

The landlady curtsied.

"I'll send up Susan to the Rectory for Mary, and mayhap she can tell."

In half an hour Susan was despatched, her mother in the mean time taking upon herself to prepare the unbidden supper; and in about an hour and a half after, Susan returned alone. The Rectory Mary had deserted her post, and was now half a dozen miles away over the fell, visiting her mother, and the girl left in charge had been fain to keep Susan for an hour's gossip to cheer her loneliness. She knew only that the Rector and her mistress had gone to Scotland; but as Scotland, in the reckoning of Susan of the inn and Sally at the Rectory was a word of quite indefinite signification, meaning sometimes a village like their own, and sometimes enlarging into the dimensions of a dale, or of a great town like the picturesque one near them, which filled up to overbrimming their idea of "the world," the information thus obtained was anything but satisfactory. So Mossgray endeavoured to ascertain something further from the landlady.

"They came here eighteen months past, come Whitsuntide. I mind it particular, because my Susan and more o' the young folks were up at the confirmation the Bishop had up yonder, in the town, the end of that summer; and it would have done any one's heart good to have seen my girl in her white muslin, and her cap, and all of them trooping down the dale in the fine morning. But the Scotch lady wouldn't have her daughter go, though the Rector took the trouble to talk to her himself. I donna understand such things, but mayhap, Sir, the like of you do that are learned, why the young Miss shouldn't have gone with the rest, like any other Christian. But they were quiet, peaceable folks, no one can say again that; and except it were wandering about the dale, the old lady leaning heavy on Miss, and looking as faint when she came back as if she had done a day's work, I know no pleasure they ever took, young or old of them; and they cared about nought but books and the post. I have seen them sit on the brow yonder in the summer time reading for hours; and in the winter time I've looked in at the window passing by—not that I'm a prying body, or care about my neighbour's business, but only, there was nought like their ways in the whole dale—and there they would be, with a turf

fire you could 'most have held in your two hands, one of them doing fine work, and the other reading; and beautiful Miss can work, Mary at the Rectory says; and it was all for some rich friends that sent them money now and again—though sure it wasn't much—but it's like you'll know, Sir?"

A painful colour was on the face of Adam Graeme: "Poor, and in trouble, and ye visited me not." He felt every word an accusation, and could scarcely answer "No."

And every month or two—I donna know but what it was every month—Miss went by herself into the town to get letters: and I've heard say she'd pay more for them than would have put a bit of something comfortable on their table many a day. They were from some far away part, and they came as regular as Sunday comes: but no one could tell who sent them, for she had ne'er a brother, and her father was dead. The Rector's lady took a deal of notice of Miss and her mother; not that she is one of that kind herself, for she's just a good easy creature, that doesn't trouble her head about learning; but she came from Scotland herself you know. I've heard Mary at the Rectory say that the old lady had been in such a many places—never biding long in one, I reckon; and you know the old word, Sir, about the rolling stone. Well, they had been in this way more than a year—a good fourteen months it would be, for it was past Midsummer—when the old lady fell ill; and she kept on getting better and worse, better and worse, till a fortnight come next Friday when she died—and a week past on Monday they buried her. At the burial, I know for certain, Miss was like nought but a shadow, and just yesterday the Rector and his lady went off to Scotland and took her with them. I've heard Mary at the Rectory say she was gone to be governess to the Rector's lady's sisters; but I donna know what's their name, nor where they live; and please, Sir, that's all I can tell you."

The talkative landlady recollected other scraps of gossip however, before she suffered so good a listener to escape her. The subdued and quiet life of the mother and daughter—the proud poverty that made no sign—the privations which were guessed at—which perhaps were magnified—the mysterious letters—the little incidental and unconscious touches which revealed through a mist of verbiage something of the second Lilies, in the fresh youth which knew no cares but those of poverty, and in the first paralysis and stupor of her heavy grief. But the other figure—the sad

Naomi leaning on the girl's arm, and sinking, amid hardship and the chill pains of penury, into a stranger's grave—every new touch did but deepen the sad cold colours of the picture, and this was the lofty Lily of the old man's dream—the sunny and joyous daughter of Greenshaw.

The next morning Mossgray left the Cumberland glen, resolving, if his search did not prosper in Scotland, to return when the reverend ruler of the little dale should have returned to his flock and his dominions. He remembered however with annoyance, when he had reached Carlisle on his way home, that he had not ascertained the Rector's name. It had not been mentioned by his primitive parishioners, to whom "the Rector" was the title of titles; but Mossgray resolved to make immediate inquiry of Mrs Fendie, whose eldest daughter had married an English clergyman somewhere in this same district. He would write also to Walter Johnstone; he would advertise if other means failed, calling on the second Lilies to honour the bequest her mother had made to him. The trust was more sacred now than ever; it was enough that one had gone down uncomforted to the grave.

CHAPTER VI.

She was a sonsie mayden
Of substance eke, and weight,
Nae cares did vex her, nae thoughts perplex her,
And her name it was callit Kate.—OLD SONG.

On the following morning, a low pony carriage, very little above the rank of a gig, and packed in its lower departments with sundry empty baskets, drew up at the door of the Bank. It was the market-day in Fendie, and the strong rustic driver of the little vehicle seemed considerably more interested in the acquaintances whom he noticed in the crowded Main Street than in the young ladies whom he assisted to alight. The elder of them was about fifteen, a little older than Hope Oswald. She was a large, clumsy, heavy girl, with soft fair features, and sleepy blue eyes. The face was well enough, so far as mere form went, and had a certain slumbrous, passive good-humour in it, not unprepossessing; but speculation there was none under the heavy

lids of those large eyes. The soft face had its tolerable proportions of white and red, but was informed by no inspiring light; for this was Hope Oswald's stupid schoolfellow—Miss Adelaide Fendie.

With her was a younger sister, a girl of ten, whose face only was less stupid, because it had a spitefulness and shrewish expression perfectly alien to the soft good-humour of Adelaide. They were both dressed after that peculiar fashion which belongs to the caterpillar state (if we may venture on such an expression) of young ladies—in unhand-some dresses of faded colours, short enough to display quite too much of Adelaide's white trousers and considerable feet, and hanging wide and clumsily on shoulders which needed no addition to their natural proportions.

The Fendies of Mount Fendie were an old family; but Mr George Oswald the banker had also some pretensions to blood, and Mrs Oswald was a laird's daughter; so there was no great derogation in the intimacy with which the youthful Misses of the more aristocratic house honoured the sprightly Hope. Miss Victoria was the more condescending of the two. She felt to the full the superiority of Mount Fendie, with its wide grounds and sweeping avenues and lodges ornamented by the delicate taste of "mamma," and considerably despised the great stone building in the main street of Fendie, with the mechanical inscription of "Bank" over its stately portico.

Adelaide knew better; even in the dignified educational establishment in Edinburgh there was some certain degree of republicanism, and Adelaide had attained to a dull consciousness of Hope's superiority, and a habit of being guided by her will, much to the comfort of her slumbrous self, whom Hope managed to carry through scrapes and difficulties in a manner which even excited a faint degree of passive wonder in the sluggish inert nature, which could not comprehend her quick intelligence. And Adelaide liked Hope, and by good fortune did not envy her; and Hope had a sort of affection of habit for Adelaide, whose dulness she laid siege to with girlish impetuosity, understanding it as little as her companion understood her; for Hope could not persuade herself that it was natural to be stupid, and so assailed the impenetrable blank of Adelaide's mind with all manner of weapons, but always unsuccessfully.

John Brown, the trusty major-domo of Mount Fendie, was bound for the market, and, not without some coaxing,

had consented to bring the young ladies with him. John touched his hat in gruff good-humour as Hope Oswald's bright face looked out from the open door, and after depositing Miss Victoria safely on the pavement, drove off with a sigh of relief, muttering,—

“That lassie'll be twenty stane afore she's dune growing. I wad as sune lift the brockit quey. Gude day to ye, Tam,—hoo's the wife? Gar the laddie gie the beast a feed—I haena muckle time.”

With which prudent beginning John descended, and evinced his haste practically, by entering into a lengthened controversy with Tam Dribble, the master of a little inn which it pleased John to patronize. Tam was a man very great in the “affairs of the state,” and the Provost of Fendie was his especial scapegoat for the sins of those in authority; so there was so much to be said for and against some recent act of this dignitary—for John Brown was a constitutional man, and defended the powers that be—that it was not until they had moistened their argument with a dram or two, and suffered the pony to make a very leisurely and substantial meal, that the factotum of Mount Fendie summed up with a clap of his hands, which made the room ring.

“Man, Tam, ye're a born gowk—and it's a' havers—and here am I wasting guid daylight listening to you. An it had been night, I might hae bidden to gie ye your answer—but me, that's a responsible man, and under authority—hout awa' wi' ye!”

With which triumphant conclusion John Brown strode forth to the market.

“Oh, Hope! isn't he a great bear, that John?” exclaimed Victoria Fendie. “Adelaide asked mamma to let us come, and mamma never will do anything at first that we want; but we coaxed her, and then when she said we might go, we had to ask John Brown to take us—to ask John Brown, indeed!—only think of ladies asking a servant! and mamma would not order him to do it. I know what I will do—I'll get some of Alick's powder and put it in the snuffers, and then I'll ask John to come and snuff the candles for me.”

“Very well, Victoria,” said Hope, “I'll tell John to-day.”

“Oh, goodness, Adelaide, only listen—how ill-natured she is! I don't care—I'll do something; it's a great shame of mamma to make us ask John Brown.”

"Hope," said Adelaide, "the new governess is coming to-morrow, and mamma says you're to come up and see her."

"Mamma only said she might come if she liked," interposed Victoria.

Adelaide paused to deliberate upon an answer.

"If I did not like to come sometimes to see Adelaide, Adelaide would not ask me," said Hope.

"But, Hope," said Adelaide, lifting her large dull blue eyes, "it's the new governess you're to come to see."

"Well, I know that; but I shall see you too, shall I not?"

"Yes," repeated the obtuse Adelaide; "but you're to come to see the new governess, mamma says."

Hope was seized with one of her fits of impatience. Why would Adelaide be so stupid?

"Shan't we tease her!" exclaimed Victoria, triumphantly. "Fred says he won't learn his lessons to a woman, and I won't learn any lessons at all, if I can help it, and mamma won't let me if I have a head-ache. Do you ever have any head-aches, Hope?"

"No," said Hope, stoutly, "head-aches! Miss Mansfield used to have them at school—you mind, Adelaide? but it's a great shame, and Miss Swinton says girls have no right to have head-aches."

"Oh, Hope! 'you *mind*.' Mamma would whip me if I said 'you mind.'"

"*My* mother would not," said the resolute Hope, "and mind is a far better word than remember or recollect. It's only one syllable, and—it's our own tongue, and it's a very good word."

"I think so too," said Adelaide, with an unwonted exertion, "because when a word's short it's easier said."

Adelaide's sentence terminated abruptly in a peal of malicious laughter from Victoria.

"Well," said the elder sister, with some faint flush of anger, "I am sure Miss Swinton used to say so—and you've no right to laugh, Victoria—I'll tell mamma."

"I don't care," was the response; "mamma is not so well pleased when you always talk about that stupid governess—you know that."

"Stupid governess!" Hope's eyes sparkled. "If you were not a child, Victoria," she said, with the dignity of a senior, "you would not speak so. Miss Swinton is a lady—

Miss Swinton is a gentlewoman! I don't know any one like Miss Swinton, except mamma, and—"

"Oh, come, tell us—tell us!" cried Victoria.

Hope drew herself up.

"Except mamma and Helen—Miss Buchanan—but you don't know her."

"Yes I do—she keeps a school; yes I do—a governess and a schoolmistress—and Hope does not know any other ladies! I hope I shall never be one of Hope's ladies."

"What are you doing now, Hope?" said Adelaide. "Mamma has made me begin to work a cover for something; I don't know what the shape of it will be, but it's all in bits like this, and mamma says it will be very pretty—and Charlotte's bringing such a load of music, and that governess!—you might come up, Hope, and help me, for I'm sure you're not doing anything yourself."

Hope acknowledged her idleness.

"No indeed, Adelaide; but I have only been two days at home; and—what's the use of working covers? I don't know why people labour at such things."

"Because their mammas make them," said Adelaide, gravely, and with a sigh; "but I think I like it too, Hope, for it's very pretty, you know."

Hope shook her head. She had been visited several times of late by some grave ruminations on this subject, and began to feel that working covers, however pretty, was in reality a quite unsatisfactory mode of life. But the cogitations were inarticulate; they had attained no shape, except at present a decided disinclination to work at all.

"And, Hope," added Adelaide, "how long do you practise every day?"

"I don't practise at all," answered Hope.

The sleepy lids of Adelaide's eyes were elevated in wonder.

"Then what in all the world do you do?" exclaimed Victoria. "I should like to be you, Hope—I should like to play all day; but Adelaide thinks she is too old to play."

"I don't play all day," said Hope, with some indignation. "Yesterday I was at Friarsford with my mother, and at Mossgray—"

"Oh, Hope!" said Adelaide, "what makes you go to see that girl? she is only a farmer's daughter."

"I don't care for her now," said Hope, with some sadness; "but it's not because she's a farmer's daughter—it's because

she is—I mean it's because *she* practises, and knits and works covers, and doesn't care for anybody—but never mind that. And then we went to Mossgray. We did not see Mr Graeme; but there's a beautiful pony—the prettiest one ever you saw—and Mrs Mense says I am to give it its name. What should I call it, Adelaide? come and help me."

Adelaide slowly shook her head—this was a stretch of invention quite beyond her.

"Call it Mischief," suggested Victoria.

"Mischief," deliberated Hope. "No, I don't like that—I want a pretty name—give me a pretty name, Adelaide."

An idea gradually illuminated Adelaide's stolid countenance.

"Call it Pretty, Hope—that would do very well."

"Oh, no, no!" exclaimed Hope; "you might call a lap-dog that, but a fine pony! so merry, and brisk, and lively—oh, no, no!"

"Call it after me," said Victoria.

"Mischief?" said Hope.

"No, indeed, not Mischief, but Victoria, or Adelaide, or—I have got it—I have got it!—call it Lillie, after our new governess."

"Is her name Lillie?" asked Hope.

"It's her first name—her Christian name," said Adelaide, "and Charlotte says she looks pretty, Hope; but she is so quiet and sad—you know she lost her mamma just a fortnight ago."

"And has she no home?" said Hope.

"No home? I am sure I don't know; Charlotte does not say anything about her home; only her mamma is dead, and she is very quiet, and looks pretty."

There was no more to be got out of Adelaide—she could only repeat her text, and wonder at the questions that sprang out of it.

"And is she coming with Mrs Heavieliagh?" asked Hope.

"Yes—you know Mr Heavieliagh is the Rector of the place her mother died in—but she came from Scotland at first, and Charlotte was very good to her, and because mamma wanted a governess, Charlotte engaged her to come to the Mount."

"Will Mrs Heavieliagh stay long?" inquired Hope.

The conversation was getting low, Victoria being busily

employed at the other end of the room, endeavouring with all her might to destroy some favourite plants of Mrs Oswald's.

"Not just now—but do you know, Hope, Alick is coming next summer, from India, where he was sent with his regiment, and mamma will give parties, and perhaps a ball—a real ball, Hope!—and you must be there. Oh, we shall be so happy!"

"Is he coming to stay?" asked Hope.

"I don't know, mamma didn't say; but she said there was to be a ball, and that Alick would perhaps bring some officers with him. I only wish the time were come—shall you not be glad, Hope?"

"If my mother will let me go, I shall like it very well," said Hope; "but about the new governess, Adelaide—is she to teach you?"

"Mamma says so," said Adelaide; "but I think I don't need any more teaching—do you, Hope? after having had to learn such quantities of things. I am sure I wish mamma would just try it herself."

Hope was not quite inclined to acquiesce in this conclusion; but there was no possibility of keeping up an argument with Adelaide, who had nothing to add to her first sentence on any subject, but merely the trouble of repeating it. So Hope wisely went to seek her mother, and to suggest the preparation of some juvenile lunch for her friends, which speedily made its appearance in the substantial form of bread and butter, jam and fruit—healthful dainties which were plentifully discussed by the visitors. John Brown arrived very shortly after, with the pony carriage, the baskets in which were no longer empty, and having with some difficulty hoisted the young ladies in, drove them away, leaving Hope pledged for "the day after to-morrow to come and see the new governess."

CHAPTER VII.

Curls are on her brow, not clouds,
Smiles are in her eye,
Simple, brave, 'mong worldly crowds
Looks she to the sky.
Joy dwells with her every day,
Sorrows touch her as they pass,
Fearless goes she on her way
O'er the springing grass,
Daunting evil passengers
With those clear brave eyes of hers.—BALLAD.

MR GEORGE OSWALD of Fendie was very proud of his daughter Hope; and Hope, as we have already seen, was very fond of ponies. Young, large animals of all kinds, indeed, were favourites with the favourite of the banker. A great tawny fellow of a dog, with large, disjointed, youthful limbs, whose uncouth gambols had as much fun and as little grace in them as could be desired, was Hope's especial playmate, counsellor, and friend. She called him Merry—(gentle playfellow of mine, over whom I could yet weep tears, so named I thee!) it was not a very musical name; but there was nothing in the least æsthetic about the happy, clumsy, kindly animal who bore it. This poor fellow fell under Mrs Oswald's displeasure sometimes, when it was discovered that Hope's new gloves had been in the great innocent mouth, or that the big paw had left its print upon Hope's garments too legibly; but the banker amply tolerated Merry.

On the morning of Hope's intended visit to Mount Fendie, her father led her proudly away to the vicinity of the stable where his own horses were kept, and where, at its door, stood the red-headed Oswald Thomson, son of a retainer of the family, holding by the bridle a handsome pony, appalled as became the steed of a lady, and arching its fine brown neck in conscious pride, under the eye of its future mistress.

"Oh, father, is it for me?" exclaimed the delighted Hope; "is it to be mine; is it to be all mine?"

And it was; and at that moment in Hope's little chamber at home, her mother, with some secret smiles over her

husband's unmeasured indulgence, and some misgivings as to the youthful limbs which this new mode of conveyance might expose to danger, was carefully spreading out a new riding-habit, companion gift to the beautiful pony. Mr Oswald had intended to bring his daughter quietly home with him, to assume the appropriate garb before she began to be an equestrian; but that did by no means suit Hope. So at dire risk to the bright muslin frock donned in unspotted purity this morning, she sprang upon the new saddle and arrived at the door radiant with laughter and exultation while her father still panted in the rear, half running in spite of his years and dignity.

Hope could not take her dog with her to Mount Fendie—it was her sole regret as she cantered away happily alone, on the quiet familiar road. One of Merry's mighty paws would have extinguished Mrs Fendie's lap-dog for ever; the gambols of a young elephant could not have been more detrimental to the trim gardens at the Mount. She was compelled to leave her favourite behind.

But never did Hope salute passing acquaintances so joyously; and Hope's list of friends was as large as it was miscellaneous, extending from Mrs Maxwell of Firthside, in her carriage, down to Robbie Carlyle, the fisherman, with the creel on his shoulders full of flounders which he had captured this morning, knee-deep in the waters of the Firth. Just before the gate of Mount Fendie was a toll—a toll which Hope paid triumphantly in presence of an admiring congregation of John Tasker's children. It was the crowning glory of her ride.

"Oh, Hope, when did you get your pony?" cried Victoria Fendie. "What a pretty one!—but it's not so pretty as Fred's either—is it, Adelaide?"

"I don't know what you call Fred's," said Adelaide, "for Fred is too little to have a pony, but I am sure yours is very pretty, Hope. Were you not afraid?"

Fred, a little spoiled, pale, ill-conditioned boy of eight stood on a bench in the garden, plucking the blossoms off an apple-tree. He paused to pull Adelaide's hair—it was invitingly near him—and then resumed his profitable occupation.

"I thought you would be afraid; but yours is a very pretty one, Hope," repeated the steady Adelaide, "and Fred is too little yet to have a pony."

Hope was so engrossed with the pony, its beauties and

good qualities, that she had almost forgotten the object of her visit. She recollected herself at last.

"Adelaide, you have not told me, has the young lady come?"

"The young lady!—she means the governess," said Victoria.

"Oh, yes—we're all to go in now, to begin school, and you may come with us, Hope. She came yesterday."

"And do you like her?" said Hope, out of breath.

"I don't know; we're all to begin school to-day, and you're to come with us. But you're always so quick, Hope Oswald!—how can people know in a day?"

"I know," said Victoria loudly, "I don't like her at all. She is so pale, and she speaks so low, and—I don't like her."

"Young ladies," said a clear voice behind them, "your mother desires that you will come in."

Hope turned quickly round. A tall, pale girl stood behind, evidently endeavouring to assume a firmness and authority which she did not possess. Her deep mourning dress, and shadowy stooping figure, and singular paleness touched the girlish romance which lay dormant in the blythe spirit of Hope. Adelaide Fendie looked at the new governess hazily out of her dull blue eyes, and did not speak. The dyspeptic little tyrant Fred said "I won't," and the shrewish Victoria laughed.

Hope had learned the stranger's name, and knew her own power over Adelaide when she chose to exert it.

"If you please, Miss Maxwell," said the prompt young lady, "I'm Hope Oswald; and Adelaide was just coming in; and we'll all go together."

Whereupon Hope seized the arm of Adelaide, and brought her, docile and obedient, into the rear of the new governess.

A very little matter was enough to upset the composure of the orphan who held that unenviable place. Her eyes filled and her lip quivered; she had fancied it impossible that children could be anything but loveable, and in the early power and bitterness of her grief to have these petty indignities put upon her, overwhelmed her inexperienced spirit. So she went in with the elder girls, painfully repressing bitter tears, and with the gasp of young woe convulsively swelling in her breast, "to flee away, and be at rest."

Mrs Fendie sat in her morning room, before a table covered with embroideries and patterns for the same. She was a tall, thin, chill woman of the *genus* clever, who had persevered so long in calling herself an excellent manager,

and a person of very intellectual tastes, that public opinion had at length succumbed under the constant iteration, and with only the emphatic protest of John Brown, who in his own circle declared her "an evendown gowk wi' a tongue like the happer of a mill," Mrs Fendie was pronounced a very clever woman. The natural-born Fendies were all dull. The last head of the house had been fretted and chafed out of his easy life by the fatal cleverness of his yoke-fellow; and even she, their mother, had been quite unable to strike any sort of fire from the leaden natures of his children.

Beside Mrs Fendie, stretched in an easy chair, with a worked footstool supporting the worked slipper, with which her mother's industry had endowed her, reclined the Reverend Mrs Heavieliagh, Mrs Fendie's eldest daughter. She was like Adelaide in her soft, large, not uncomely features, and in the passive good humour of their expression; but Mrs Heavieliagh's development of the family character was indolence, comfortable, lazy, luxurious repose; and in her gay-coloured ample draperies, and lounging attitude, and slumbrous face, she formed a good foil to the keen, sharp, steel-like mother, who worked indefatigably by her side. Mrs Heavieliagh had no admiration of work; she played with the long ears of the lap-dog on her knee, and was perfectly comfortable.

"How do you do, Hope Oswald?" said Mrs Fendie; "how's your mamma? Sit down, children, I have something to say to you. Fred, don't pull my frame; Victoria, be quiet. Sit down, Miss Maxwell, I wish particularly to address myself to you."

Mrs Fendie arranged her work; she was copying a French lithograph like Maggie Irving, but she was copying it with the needle and not with the pencil, and cleared her voice oratorically. Lillias Maxwell with some apparent timidity took the chair pointed to her, and sat down to listen, the great tears gathering under her eyelids. Hope placed herself very near the new governess, in instinctive sympathy. She was not so "pretty-looking" as Adelaide had predicted. She was singularly pale, and had very dark hair, and large deep-blue eyes—blue eyes so dark that Hope, to whom blue eyes always suggested the slumbrous orbs of Adelaide Fendie, gave Miss Maxwell's credit for being black. The dark mass of hair and the mourning dress made the young orphan look still more ethereal and shadowy. She was not like Hope's

model, Helen Buchanan ; she was not nearly so life-like, and seemed to want altogether the nervous impulsive strength of Helen. Sudden flushes indeed did sometimes pass over her colourless cheek for a moment—flushes painfully deep and vivid ; but there was nothing on this face like the constantly varying colour, which wavered on Helen's cheek like the coming and going of breath. Nevertheless, there was a similarity in the age, and perhaps in the circumstances, which made Hope associate the stranger with her friend.

"You will understand, Miss Maxwell," said Mrs Fendie, "that I consider it a very important charge which I, as a mother, give into your hands, when I delegate to you the care of these children. Such wonderful interests at stake ! such extraordinary effects your humble teachings may help to produce ! When I look at that boy," and Mrs Fendie cast a sentimental glance at the dyspeptic Fred, "it quite overwhelms me. Oh, Fred ! you wicked child, what have you been doing !"

Mrs Fendie had chosen an unfavourable moment for her sentimental glance, the young gentleman being busily employed opening the eyes of a scriptural personage in one of the aforesaid patterns for embroidery, by thrusting a pencil through them. On being thus pathetically appealed to Master Fred threw down the paper, and exclaimed,—"*It's not me, it's Vic.*"

Mrs Fendie restrained Victoria's self-defence, by a majestic wave of her hand, and resumed,—"*In the first place, concerning Miss Fendie—hold up your head, Adelaide.*" Adelaide fixed her eyes upon the wall, awkwardly conscious of being looked at, and blushed, a dull, gradual blush,—"*you will need rather to direct the young lady's studies than to enter on the drudgery of teaching—and I am sure to a well-regulated mind nothing could be more delightful. I shall expect you to read with Miss Fendie, to direct her to those subjects which most call for a lady's attention ; to attend to her deportment and carriage, to superintend her work, to see that her wardrobe is kept in proper order, and that she does not get slovenly in her dress ; besides—*"

"Oh, mamma !" exclaimed Victoria, "*yonder's old Mr Graeme of Mossgray riding along the avenue ;—what will he want, I wonder ? oh goodness, mamma, isn't it strange ? let me go to see.*"

"Old Mr Graeme of Mossgray !" exclaimed Mrs Fendie,

rising ; " be quiet, Victoria, how dare you interrupt me ? A very strange visitor certainly :—you have not seen him since your marriage, Charlotte :—perhaps he has heard you are here, and intends to be like other people for once in his life."

Mrs Heavieigh lifted her eyelids with some apparent difficulty and looked a little ashamed ; to tell the truth, she had been dozing during her mother's *preche*, and did not at all know what this commotion was about. Mrs Fendie's address was broken short, but Hope perceived Lillas Maxwell still trembling in her chair.

There was a deep bow-window in the end of the room ; the new governess, unnoticed in the little bustle of interest with which the Fendie family awaited their unusual visitor, stole by degrees into its recess. Hope Oswald followed her ; it was scarcely quite delicate perhaps ; but Hope was anxious to express something of her sympathy.

Lillas leaned upon the window—she shook so much that she needed it—and the sympathetic girl beside her saw how thin and transparent the long white fingers were, which tremblingly supported her brow. " If you please, Miss Maxwell," said Hope compassionately, " I am afraid you are not well ; and I wish my mother were only here, for she would know—and, Miss Maxwell, if you please, do not look so sad."

The stranger could not bear this ; she turned her head away, and shrank further into the shadow of the curtains, and pressed her thin fingers upon her eyes, but the tears would be restrained no longer, and Hope hastily placed herself in front of the window, that no eyes but her own might perceive the agony of silent weeping, which the unfriended, solitary girl could not control. She had borne as she best could the foolish levity and inconsiderate rudeness of the children, and half bewildered with the long stretch of endurance, had silently suffered the chill un pitying lectures of Mrs Fendie, but the first touch of kindness made the full cup overflow. All the simple philosophies with which Lillas had tried to subdue the natural strength of her feelings, could not make her grief less green and recent ; and Hope stood reverently by, in silence, while the tears poured down like rain, and the shadowy figure before her shook with suppressed sobs. The child Hope had become the benefactor of the orphan, for there was healing in those tears.

CHAPTER VIII.

Amang the fremd I had wandered lang,
Heavy was my heart, and sad my sang ;
Ae green sod covered a' my kin,
There were storms without, and nae hope within,
When through the mist a sun-glint came,
And I heard a voice, and it aye said hame—
Hame, oh hame! is there rest for me
But an' aneath the green willow tree?—BALLAD.

THE Laird of Mossgray greeted Mrs Fendie and her daughter with his usual old-fashioned, graceful politeness—there was something courtly in the gentle bearing of the recluse old man—and said some kindly words of recognition to all the younger personages present, except Hope, who, to the great amazement of the little Fendies, continued steadily before the bow-window, and did not turn round to receive the salutations of Mossgray. Only a very few ordinary observations had been exchanged, when the old man explained his errand.

“I have been seeking a young friend of mine in Cumberland,” said Mossgray, in a voice whose tone of serene kindness thrilled on the ear of Lillias Maxwell, like some familiar music, stilling her tears ; “and I have some idea, Mrs Fendie, that your kindness could assist me in my search. I have just returned—”

Hope Oswald left her place by the window, and as Mossgray's eye wandered there, he suddenly stopped and started from his seat. Drawing back, shivering and half afraid, Lillias looked at him, with tears trembling on her long eyelash, and her white, transparent hand shading her eyes. She was conscious of the presence of no other but himself for the moment, and the strange contradiction of her look, which seemed half to appeal to him for protection, and half to shrink from his scrutiny, confirmed the old man in the sudden idea that this was his ward. Any resemblance that she had to her mother was merely the indefinite and shadowy one, which throws its strange link of kindred over faces which in form and expression are not alike ; but he could recognise the daughter

of Liliass Johnstone better in the pale, solitary orphan girl before him, than if she had borne her mother's blooming face, or seemed as full of elastic youth and life as she did, when he saw her last. They stood looking at each other for a moment, and then Mossgray advanced extending his hands.

"Liliass—Liliass Maxwell—that is your name?—and was it the dead, or was it me, whom you distrusted, when you fled from the guardian your mother committed you to?—This was ill-done, Liliass; but you have had weeping and sorrow enough, my poor child, and now you must come home."

Come home!—was there still such a word for the orphan?

She could not realize it; she sat down passively on the chair Hope Oswald brought her, and spite of the large tears which fell silently now and then, continued to fix her sorrowful eyes upon her mother's friend. The strange stupor she was in alarmed them all at last.

"Liliass—Liliass,"—repeated Mossgray, as he gently held her hand; but Liliass did not speak. She had been denied the natural due and right of grief; she had been hurried away from her mother's grave, almost before her desolate heart had been able to shed tears; and now the outraged nature asserted itself:—the strained strength gave way.

At last the weeping came again in a flood, and Liliass awoke; awoke to hear gentle tongues of women who had only cold words to say to her before; and, gentlest of all, the old man's voice, like some kind sound which she had heard in dreams, and waking, yearned to hear again. And the burden of its speech was ever home; it came upon her ear again and again indistinct in every accent but that—what preceded and what followed was lost to her bewildered sense, but the one word rang clearly through the mist that enveloped her—she was to come home.

And so she did: Hope Oswald wrapped her humble shawl about her, and Mrs Fendie, with her strangely changed voice, accompanied her to the door, and there supported by Mossgray, she entered the carriage which had been sent for, and was driven from the door, the old man sitting by her side. Liliass could scarcely convince herself, until she had entered the room at Mossgray called her own, that it was not all a dream.

The room had been prepared and ready for many days waiting for its stranger guest. A little fire burned in the grate, and gave the look of welcome, which the familiar

living, kindly light does give at all times; and through the small, clear panes of the window, the April sun shone in, in the gentle joy of spring. The panelled walls were painted a sombre quiet colour, but here and there were hung small pictures in deep, rich, old-fashioned frames—pictures of such pure faces, saints and angels, as seem now and then to have looked in upon the dreaming sense of olden artists—not all gentle or serene, or at rest, but speaking the common language of humanity; the constantly varying tongue, in whose very weakness, of change and tremulous expression, lies its might and charm.

Some books were arranged upon an old cabinet; books which are everywhere familiar, the friends of all who are able for such fellowship; and some, too, less universally appreciated, which were yet worthy of their place. But Liliás did not then perceive these particulars of her guardian's delicate care for her. She sat down beside the window, and looked about in a dream.

Before her lay the water, and its peaceful banks, with the charm of youth upon them; beyond were scattered houses with the homelike wealth of cultivated land around, the dwellings of those who, working with honest hands, brought seed and bread out of the soil, as God did prosper them. At her right hand the gray mass of the old warlike tower rose up against the quiet sky, with the moss of peace upon its embattled walls. Liliás had known all her life the fortunes of the poor—had wandered hither and thither with her mother, following the devious track of the weak father, who pursued without ceasing the fortune he had not firmness to wait, or strength to work for; so that in many fair places where they had been, the solitary woman and grave girl had longed to find a home and abiding place, but had been able never. The hunted fortune fled always further away, and the querulous, feeble nature, complaining with fretful selfishness of his own ill-fate, seemed always constrained to follow. Strangers and vagabonds they had been continually, and after the brief repose of the widow and her child in the lonely Cumberland glen, Liliás had felt, when she was hurried away in her earliest agony, that thus it was to be for ever.

But now the atmosphere of home descended about her. Only the natural successions of time, one generation going and another coming, had changed the inmates of these walls. Steadily here upon its native ground, the old house stood like

a stately oak, which had shed its acorns there, autumn after autumn, before human eye was near to see, and should remain until the end. We do not think distinct thoughts at times which form the crises of our life, and Liliás did not deliberately reflect on this; but it struck strongly upon her through the mist of sorrow and wonder she was in. This house, whose wealth was of the soil below and the firmament above, whose inheritance was not of silver or of gold, unproductive and barren, but of the fertile land, and the sunshine and the rain of God; this was her home.

But sorrow had broken in her case the elastic nature of youth. Had she remained among strangers, her stay must soon have had a not unusual end; she would have endured for a while, and then have somewhere withdrawn herself to die as her mother died, but bitterer to die alone. As it was, Mossgray gained his ward only in time to save her; and all the summer through Liliás had to be tended like a delicate flower. Vainly she exerted herself and tried to be strong; vainly endeavoured to lessen the anxious cares of her guardian; but it would not do. The springs of youthful strength were stemmed in her worn-out heart. For a few days she had been able convulsively to bind and keep her natural sorrow down; but the reaction was vehement and long.

The lilies daily placed upon her table, the books of all pleasant kinds which he constantly brought to her, the visitors whom, after a month or two had elapsed, he tolerated, and indeed encouraged, for her sake—all the gentle things the old man did, day by day, and hour by hour, conspired to invigorate the broken mind of Liliás, and restore its tone and power. She knew that he too grieved for the dead, and she felt that it became her to render him some other return for his tenderness to herself than those pale looks and tears; so conscientiously and painfully she struggled to regain the cheerfulness becoming her years. It was a hard task, for Liliás had not the elastic vitality which springs up in renewed vigour from the prostration of grief—her nature had much of pensive calm in it; but she struggled against her overwhelming sorrow, and the very effort helped her to overcome.

Mrs Oswald visited her in kindly friendship, and Mrs Fendie came to patronize, and suggest, and arrange. Mrs Fendie did not see how Miss Maxwell could remain, unless Mr Graeme got some "experienced person," some presiding

matron to make his house a proper residence for his ward. Adam Graeme of Mossgray was sixty; he thought the countryside had known him long enough and well enough to trust the daughter of Lillas Johnstone in his hands, as confidently as though he had been her father; and Mrs Oswald agreed with him.

And Lillas had at once secured the very warm friendship of Hope, who already meditated making use of her in her grand scheme for the elevation of Helen Buchanan, and the conversion of her father. To make Miss Maxwell intimate with Helen, Hope decided in her very grave and elaborate deliberations over the whole difficult question of her father's resolution and the means to overcome it, would be a great step in advance, but it was decidedly impracticable at present; so Hope, like a wise general, prepared the way with each by praising the other, and suspended more practical operations.

Slowly the faint colour which was natural to her began to dawn upon the white cheeks of Mossgray's Lillas. The old man's study in the tower was almost deserted; the small projecting turret with its windowed roof and wondrous telescope began to look forlorn and melancholy; the large low room within lay whole days in gloomy silence; the famous chemic tools of which the children of Fendie had heard thrilling whispers, were gathering a gentle coat of dust. Their owner had experiments to make of a kind more curious than those in which he used them. He was discovering one by one the qualities of the human heart so strangely given in charge to him—was discerning star after star rise upon her firmament—patience, faith, hope—kindly human hope, which has somewhat in this very world beside its riches in the world to come.

One autumn evening (for the summer was over before Lillas recovered her strength) they went out together to the river-side. He was telling her how it had been his fellow and companion all his days.

"There is something human in this running water," said the old man. "So we go on, Lillas, through our different stages, blind to what is to come next, often unconscious of the pleasant places we travel through; but though we chafe sometimes, and seem to pause and delay, how constantly the stream runs on! I like it for its humanity—for all the light, and all the darkness, and the winds that touch, and the rains that flood it—for its beginning and for its end. It pleases

me to give it life and utterance, and think it human like myself."

"You knew it when you were young, Mossgray," said Lillas, "and it is beside you still."

She still felt this as something strangely gladdening; to dwell in one place a lifetime; to appropriate it all; to have friendships with its hills and its rivers; to feel that it was home.

"Yes," said Mossgray, looking back at his old house as it lay in the shade, from which the slanting light of the western sun had nearly passed away, "yes, it is a happiness—it is a pleasant thread, this river, on which to hang the memories of one's life; there was no water, Lillas, in your Cumberland glen?"

"Only a brook," was the answer, "and we used to sit and watch it, for its way was too steep to follow—and sometimes—"

Ah, that climbing sorrow! how it returned and returned again!

"But you have travelled," said Mossgray, gently leading her from this painful recollection; "you have scarcely gone so far as I have, but you have seen many places:—let me hear of your wanderings, Lillas."

"Have you been far away, Mossgray?"

"Very far," said Mossgray, with a mournful smile, "and my furthest journey was a very sad one; I went to seek a dear friend, and I found him not—that was in India."

"In India!" A flush of sudden light came over the face which turned to him so earnestly.

"Yes. Are you interested in that great world, Lillas?"

"It must be a very great country indeed," said Lillas, slowly, "where the principal places are so far apart. Will you tell me where you were, Mossgray?"

The old man smiled.

"I could have told you long since, had I known you cared for such a subject. I was in Bombay, Lillas, and far into the interior beyond Bombay."

"In Bombay!" There was another flush of interest—the tall slight figure had never looked so life-like, nor the form so animated.

"Yes, in Bombay—do you know anything of Bombay, Lillas?"

"No, no," said Lillas, with a sudden blush, "I do not

know—but I have heard—we had a friend once who went there.”

She cast a sidelong, tremulous look upward to his face. He did not smile as she feared he would. It pleased him to hear of the friend, and the tone in which the friend was mentioned pleased him. He was glad there was some one in the world, the name of whose habitation had power to move the slumbering fountain of young life within her; he was glad that in this present world she had some other tie than the new relationship which bound her to himself, and in his delicate kindness he looked and spoke gravely, to encourage her to confide in him.

“And you would like me to tell you about it. Would not reading do as well?”

“No, no,” repeated Liliass; “the book does not live—you do not see the eyes which saw those things you want to hear of, as I see yours, Mossgray, and—the place is fine, is it not?”

“I think so,” was the answer; “yes, I remember that; but, Liliass, when I was there, I was sick at heart—sick with anxiety at first—and sick when I came away, with hope deferred—I should say with hope extinguished. The calamity that maketh the heart sick, clouds a fair landscape sadly, Liliass, and when I think of that beautiful eastern country, I think of it as the grave of my friend.”

“Did he die?” asked Liliass, in the tremulous low voice, which for the few preceding moments had been changed.

Mossgray paused. Thirty years had elapsed since colder men decided Hew Murray’s fate, thirty years without a sign or token, the faintest that hope could build on; and yet the old man hesitated to say he died.

“Liliass, I cannot tell. He was my dear friend; we were close brethren in our youth; do you think he can have lived these thirty years, and given no sign?”

“No, Mossgray,” said Liliass, “oh, no, no! I do not think it can be hard to die; but to live while your dearest friends think you are dead—no, no—it could not be!”

The old man sighed.

“Then he is dead,” he said.

There was a pause.

“And this friend of yours,” resumed Mossgray, at last, “he likes Bombay, Liliass?”

The light came again more timidly.

"I think so—I mean, he does not *like* it—it is not home—but—"

"But he thinks he will prosper there, and he is young, and has good cause for his toil?"

Lilias looked at her guardian shyly again; but there was no ghost of raillery on the kind face of Mossgray; he would have her think cheerily of the young hopes of the labourer over the sea.

And Lilias looked away far into the distant air, and answered with a voice so full and rich in its low music, that Mossgray scarcely knew it for hers,—

"And for his mother's sake."

CHAPTER IX.

"She is like that harp the winds do play upon; mark her well. She shall tell you what she dreams unwittingly, for her face is no mask—nothing but a veil, and under it you shall see her heart beat."—OLD PLAY.

HELEN BUCHANAN stood alone at the gate of her mother's garden; there was a nervous tremor about her as she leaned upon the hawthorn-hedge, with her face towards the setting sun. These October nights were becoming chill, and the shawl she drew round her was not a warm one; but her trembling sprung from quite another cause. She was young and proud and poor; and William Oswald, walking as if for a wager, and looking almost as nervously firm as she did, had newly left the gate.

He had been telling her something which to him seemed perfectly reasonable, something which certainly in the abstract did not look unreasonable in any view: that he, a man, able to exercise judgment for himself, and able honourably to earn his own bread, did not feel himself bound by the decision of his father, did not feel by any means that his father's iron will should or could restrain him in those early, strong, energetic years of his manhood; that honouring his father as a father should be honoured, he yet felt some individual rights, which no man could exercise for him. So far was well

enough; the daughter of Walter Buchanan drew up her elastic figure, and strengthening herself in nervous stillness waited for what she knew would follow.

It came in a flood—bold, and grave, and decided as William Oswald always was, when his reserve was broken through. The world was all before them where to choose, and Helen felt that when he spoke of independent labour for which he was strong and able, and of success to be won by that, he spoke the truth, and for a moment the hereditary pride ebbed, and her heart rose to the congenial struggle; but it could not be. Before half the words of her answer were spoken, he had learned it all from the unmistakeable language of her face. “Never, unless received in honour and good-will, with the respect and tenderness which became a daughter. Never!”

They had parted—not in anger, but with some degree of excitement and pain—each with a stronger resolution to overcome the other, each only the more determined to persevere and win. The matter had become a single-handed combat, the combatants were well matched, the issue doubtful; time and the hour could alone decide.

And still, that nervous thrill passing over her like wind, Helen stood at the gate looking towards the west. With one of those sudden changes to which her temperament is liable, a flood of bitter thoughts had suddenly stolen into her mind. It was not envious repining, it was scarcely discontent; but she began to remember that there in her youth she stood alone—that the very strength which she had to earn bread for herself and her mother, by her own honourable labour, had cast her down in the small society about them, to a lower and to a solitary place—that those bright youthful days, to others so instinct with joyous life, were to her days of gloomy labour, evenings of solitude. And thronging in the rear of these, were hosts of indefinite, rapid, inexpressible feelings; remembrances of petty slights and proud swellings of the wounded heart, which in spite of its years of independent working, was still but a girl's. The deep melancholy and depression peculiar to her nature—peculiar only in transient fits, soon swept away by the inherent strength of life and hope within—lowered over her like a cloud. There came to her eyes involuntary causeless tears: her heart grew blank and dark within her, and wistfully she looked upward to the sky—the wonderful western sky with its flushed clouds of

sunset—thinking in her sad, proud loneliness that only this was left to her of the natural gladnesses of youth.

Just then an eager hand was thrust into hers, and the joyous voice of Hope Oswald broke in upon her reverie.

“Helen, Helen, what makes you always stand here and look at the sun?”

The momentary distemper tinged even her speech.

“Because I like to see him sink, Hope. I like to watch him gliding away yonder behind the hill, and see how blank and cold it all looks after he is gone.”

“Ay! but, Helen, look how beautiful the clouds are,” said Hope, “you would think the sun was hiding yonder. See, see! how grand it is!—and him away all the time beyond the hill. You will not look, Helen: but *I* think the clouds are as beautiful as the sun.”

“And in half an hour they will all have melted away,” said the young moralizer, “and so does everything in the world that is beautiful, Hope. The fair colours fade into that pale, blank grey, and the air grows chill and mournful, and then comes the night.”

“But do you not like the night, Helen?” asked the wondering Hope.

“I was not thinking of the night, I was thinking of what comes upon us in the world,” said Helen dreamily in her self-communion, “and how the dull colourless sky droops over us, and the light passes away, and the inexorable darkness comes.”

She paused—she was fairly afloat on this dark stream of thought, becoming sadder and more downcast with every word she spoke. The causeless tears hung upon her eyelashes, her lips quivered and faltered; the deep cloud of characteristic melancholy had fallen like a veil upon her heart.

“But Helen,” said Hope, in a low alarmed voice, as she pressed close to her friend’s side. “Helen, is that true? People say it in books, and ministers say it. It is in the Bible I heard one say, but *I* never saw it in the Bible, Helen.”

“Saw what?”

“What the minister said—what you were saying, Helen—that the world is very miserable, that everybody must be unhappy. Helen, you are old, you know better than me; but I think it is not true.”

The electric touch was given; there needed no more; bravely upon the rising tide the distempered thoughts went out, not to return again until their time. The tears went back to their fountain—the face brightened with its varying, fluttering colour—the dark mood was gone.

“Did I say so, Hope? did you think I said so? No, no, it is not true!” said Helen, the words coming quick and low, in her rapid revulsion of feeling; “there is sorrow and there is joy, as there are darkness and light; but the night is good as well as the day, and it is blessed to live—blessed to have all the changes God sends to us—good and evil—the sweet and the bitter—blessed and not miserable, Hope.”

The clouds were hovering over the blank hill far away in golden masses, rounded with the soft advancing gloom of night, and overhead was the peaceful sky, pure and pale in the stillness of its rest.

“Sometimes we have storms, Hope,” said the repentant Helen, “and sometimes it is dark—dark—you do not know how dark it grows sometimes; but the sun rises every morning, and every night—look up yonder, how quiet the sky is—do you think the world could be miserable, Hope, so long as there is the sky and the sun?”

Hope looked up wistfully but did not speak, for she could not quite understand yet, either the melancholy itself or the sudden change; but she hung upon Helen’s arm in her affectionate girlish way, and they stood together in silence watching how the colours faded one by one, till the hill in the west grew only a great dark shadow, and parting into long pale misty streaks, the clouds lay motionless upon the calm, cold heaven. There is a long stretch of wet sand yonder where the broad Firth ought to be, and something chill and disconsolate, speaking of early winter, is in that gusty inconsistent breeze, which already carries past them a yellow leaf or two, dead so soon; but Helen Buchanan, wayward and inconsistent too, has bright life in her eyes, and sees nothing sad in all she looks upon. Within herself has risen this wilful, strong, capricious light proper to her nature—a nature strangely formed, as God builds not as man does—with every delicate line and shadowy curve, belonging separately to the gentle weak, conspiring to perfect it as strong.

Mrs Buchanan was a cheerful, sanguine woman; she liked to have her little parlour look bright after its homely fashion, though not with tawdry embellishments, or those

poor ornamental shifts of poverty with which women dwelling at home are apt to solace their vacant hours, and imitate the costly follies of their richer sisters. A little bright fire burned in the grate, not without a certain aroma which whispered of the fragrant *peat*, that helped to compose it; and the parlour with only its one candle was full of cheerful light. The gentle, kindly mother was jealous of the varying moods of her sole child, and was fain to use all simple arts to throw the spell of quiet cheerfulness over the room in which they spent these long evenings almost constantly alone.

"Mrs Buchanan," said Hope, "Helen is sad—I want you to tell me why everybody in Fendie is sad; they never used to be before—it is only this year."

Mrs Buchanan had already read her daughter's face; but she saw that the cloud, if there had been a cloud, was gone, and that it was not expedient to speak of it.

"If you will tell me, Hope, my dear," said Helen's good mother, "who everybody is, I shall answer your question; but I am very sure I saw a great number of people in Fendie to-day, who had no sadness about them."

"Oh, but who were they, Mrs Buchanan?" asked Hope.

Mrs Buchanan smiled.

"There was Robert Johnston, the grocer—he got another daughter last night; and there was Maxwell Dickson at the library—his son Robbie got a prize yesterday at the academy; and there was—"

Hope was disdainful; and even the face of her friend Helen glowed into genial laughter, as she threw back her unruly hair and interrupted Mrs Buchanan in great impatience.

"But I did not mean them! I was not thinking of *them*. Maxwell Dickson! as if he knew what it was to be sad—and that great lout Robbie; but I don't care about them—it's our own folk—it's—"

"When do you go back to Edinburgh?" interrupted Helen.

"Oh, next month," was the answer, "my mother says I may stay till Hallowe'en; but, Helen, my mother is going to ask Miss Swinton to come with me to Fendie next summer, at the vacation."

"You seem to be very fond of Miss Swinton, Hope?" said Mrs Buchanan.

"Oh, yes, everybody is—you would like her too, Mrs Buchanan."

"Should I? and why do you think that, Hope?"

"Oh, I know," said Hope, in wise certainty, "because she likes Helen."

The argument was irresistible, and Mrs Buchanan confessed it, by pulling Hope's exuberant hair.

"Likes me!" the varying colour heightened on Helen's face. "She does not know me, Hope."

"Yes, but she does, Helen," answered the sagacious Hope, "for I used to tell her; and she knows you quite well, and she says you are brave. Helen, if you only saw Miss Swinton! but you will when she comes."

"She says I am brave;" Helen repeated the consolatory words under her breath, and asked herself "why?"

"But I do not know, my dear," said Mrs Buchanan, "how Helen is to see this friend of yours, unless she calls on us—and we are strangers to her, you know."

Mrs Buchanan was a little proud—she had no idea of being condescended to.

"Only wait till she comes," said Hope, triumphantly, "I know she will want to see Helen sooner than anybody else, because she says Helen is—"

Helen interposed. She fancied that Hope intended to repeat the same word of commendation, and the quick spirit did not choose to hear it again. She was mistaken—Hope intended to bestow upon her friend the highest title in her vocabulary—that of gentlewoman—in name of Miss Swinton.

"When Miss Swinton speaks of me so kindly," said Helen in haste, "let me hear what she calls you, Hope."

Hope hesitated—she liked very well to repeat the commendation to herself, but had a little tremor in saying it aloud—if Helen laughed at her!

"I don't know—perhaps she did not mean it," said Hope, slowly, "but Miss Swinton says I am sensible, Helen."

Mrs Buchanan shed the rebellious hair off Hope's open candid forehead, and Helen laughed in such kindly wise as could by no possibility mean ridicule, as her mother said,—

"And so you are, Hope—and a good bairn besides. Miss Swinton is quite right."

Whereupon Hope launched forth into another panegyric upon Miss Swinton. Helen did not very distinctly hear her. There was a good deal of the suggestive in Hope's conversation, and her friend had snatched from it in her hasty fashion the germ of an important idea.

"Mother," said Helen, breaking in abruptly upon Hope, "should you like to live in Edinburgh?"

Mrs Buchanan's mind was not so rapid as her daughter's. She looked up with a quiet unmoved smile.

"I do not doubt I should, Helen; most people like Edinburgh; but why do you ask me?"

Mrs Buchanan laid down her work as she spoke, and waited for the proposal which she knew was to follow. She had yet no glimmering of what it was, but she had studied those kindling eyes too long not to know that the sudden flush of some new purpose possessed them.

"Suppose we could go," said Helen, rapidly; "suppose I could get a situation, mother, with some one like Miss Swinton, with Miss Swinton herself perhaps; should you like it? would you go to Edinburgh?"

Mrs Buchanan paused to think; the glowing moving face before her was not of the kind which takes time to deliberate. Helen clasped her small nervous fingers and looked into the vacant air, with her fixed unconscious eyes, and saw no obstacle in the way; no lingering tenderness to subdue; no sickness of heart to overcome; when they came hereafter she would do battle against them bravely—now, she saw them not.

"Oh, Helen!" exclaimed Hope, breathless with her first surprise and delight; but Hope recollected herself; this would be a death-blow to all her schemes, so she added,—“Helen, the teachers all live with Miss Swinton. Mrs Buchanan, you would not like to be alone?”

Mrs Buchanan still said nothing. It was very true she would not like to be alone, and very true it was also that she shrank from the unknown evils of change, and was better pleased to remain with the quiet cares she knew, than encounter those she did not know; but, unlike Hope, she said nothing. She did not choose to throw down, by any sudden decision, the dreams with which her daughter was already filling the air.

"Do you think I would not do for Miss Swinton, Hope?" asked Helen.

"Helen!" exclaimed Hope, indignantly.

"Well then, why do you say that?"

"Because," and Hope tried to put wise meanings into her own girlish open face, and to make it as eloquent as Helen's; "because, Helen, I should not like you to go away

from Fendie. Oh! no, no, you must stay always at home."

And as Helen lifted her flushed face, the elaborate look of Hope and her mother's anxious glance fell upon her together. They only made the blood rush more warmly about her heart. She started with a rapid nervous impulse: "Mother, if you do not disapprove, let me write to Miss Swinton to-morrow."

Poor Hope Oswald! she had been *too* sensible—she had defeated her own well-digested, painfully-constructed plan. Miss Swinton instead of a powerful auxiliary threatened to become the most hopeless barrier in her way, and Hope was almost in despair. She began immediately to belie Edinburgh; to manufacture grievances; and to represent how very hard, especially for the teachers, was the laborious life at school; but Helen's fixed dreamy, unconscious face warned her it was all lost, and very disconsolately she said good-night.

"My father would be pleased enough if it was Miss Maxwell," thought Hope with some disdain, as she went home, "all because Mr Graeme will leave her Mossgray. I wish somebody would give Helen a place like Mossgray—but I don't either—because Helen is better than we are, though she is poor. Who's that?"

Hope's reverie concluded very abruptly—who was it?

Alas, it was the interesting, sentimental, young minister newly placed in the church of Fendie, whom all the town delighted to honour. He did not see her as he went steadily down the dim road, and the dismayed Hope stood still to watch him, with prophetic terror. Yes, indeed, it is Mrs Buchanan's gate he stops at; and now the door is opened, and a flash of warm light shines for a moment into the garden, and the Reverend Robert Insches is admitted. Burning with suppressed anger, the jealous Hope hurried home, eager to defy and defeat her father, and utterly to destroy any presumptuous hopes which the Reverend Robert Insches might entertain in regard to Helen Buchanan.

CHAPTER X.

The morning rises dimly,
There are clouds and there is rain,
But always the sun is there—
So softly breaking, parting like the mists
About the hills, the dismayed sorrow looses
Her heavy veil and cloak of mourning from her,
And sometimes smiling, sometimes weeping, like
The skies in April, lifts her head again,
And looks upon the light.

"MISS MAXWELL," said Hope Oswald, as she sat on a low chair by the side of Liliass on the morning of Hallowe'en, the last day she was to spend at home: "you have never seen Helen Buchanan yet;—I should like so much to let you see her before I go away."

"And you are going away to-morrow, Hope?" said Liliass.

"Yes," said Hope, disconsolately; "my father is to take me to-morrow. I should be so glad, Miss Maxwell, if you only knew Helen."

"Well, Hope," said Liliass, "you must contrive to introduce us to each other to-night. I see no other way of accomplishing it."

"But, Miss Maxwell," said Hope, with some confusion, "Helen will not be at our house to-night,—she never comes to our house—she always stays at home."

"And why does she always stay at home?"

Hope's face flushed indignantly.

"Because she has to keep a school—not a school for young ladies—and because she is proud, and other people are foolish and do not know what it is to be a gentlewoman;—and because my father—"

Hope paused, perceiving that it might not be necessary to publish the faults of her father. At the same time Hope was very anxious to make Liliass useful in her absence as a means of proclaiming the excellencies of Helen; and there was yet another thing which Hope desired to make Liliass understand,—that William was by no means an eligible *parti*, whatever his father or Mossgray might say to the contrary.

Hope had never heard yet of the mysterious Indian letters, and did not know that Liliass was as completely fortified against the attractions of William as he was from hers.

"Because she keeps a school, and because she is proud," repeated Liliass; "but she has been here in Fendie all her life—and she must have friends."

"Oh, yes," answered Hope, promptly, "she has plenty of friends; only you know, Miss Maxwell, nobody she cares about—I don't mean that either—I mean there is nobody like herself—I never saw any one like Helen but you."

"And am I like Helen?"

Hope looked up at the calm, pensive face before her with its fair still features, and faint colour, and thoughtful melancholy eyes—and confessed to herself that it was not so.

"No—I don't mean you are like in the face—only—" Hope paused and was puzzled, "only you are Helen's age—and you are alone—and—you are a gentlewoman."

Liliass smiled

"Thank you, Hope, for your good opinion; but perhaps if Miss Buchanan is so proud she would not like me to call on her."

"Oh, would you go?" exclaimed Hope—"Oh, Miss Maxwell, if you would only go! I did not mean that Helen was proud—only she does not care for people who do not care for her."

"Mossgray bids me go out," said Liliass;—she had very soon adopted the kindly territorial name which was at once respectful and familiar, and by which her guardian liked to be called; "and the day is bright—will you take me with you, Hope, and we shall go to see Miss Buchanan?"

Hope was full of delight and thanks.

"But if you come to Fendie now, mind you are not to go back till night;—for you promised to be with us at Hallowe'en—mind, Miss Maxwell."

Miss Maxwell did mind, and gently promised she would remain, though the mirth of the youthful party was scarcely very congenial to her subdued spirits; and when she had equipped herself for her walk, and had received the smiling permission which she asked from Mossgray, and with Hope's hand in hers, was walking down the water-side to Fendie, she resumed the subject,—

"And so you think, Hope, that Miss Buchanan could not be induced to meet us to-night?"

Hope looked up with some alarm.

"My mother has not asked her to come. Oh, Miss Maxwell, do you think my father would not be angry if I did?"

Lilias shook her head;—she did not know.

"But to be sure Helen would not come," said Hope, ruefully. "Do you know, Miss Maxwell—"

"Do I know what, Hope?"

But Hope still hesitated.

"I mean, Miss Maxwell—if you like Helen—you are sure to like her—at least I think you will—perhaps; if you do like Helen, will you tell my father sometime how good she is—for my father does not know Helen."

Lilias looked at Hope with a smile, and Hope returned the look with a very sagacious, perplexed, deliberative expression upon her fresh, candid face.

"You seem to be very fond of Miss Buchanan, Hope?"

"And so I am," said Hope, blythely, "and so is everybody—only—my father does not know Helen."

This anxious affection of Hope's, childish at once, and chivalrous, had a great deal of interest for Lilias, and she was silent now, her thoughts almost as much occupied about Helen as were those of Helen's youthful champion.

"Helen will like you, Miss Maxwell," said Hope, suddenly. "I know she will; for the people have been saying so much about you since you came."

The colour rose gently on the cheek of Lilias.

"What have they said about me, Hope?"

"Oh, not very much—only that they were sorry you were ill, and thought you would be so solitary at Mossgray. Helen saw you at church, Miss Maxwell, and when the people speak about the strange young lady, she calls you the lily of Mossgray; but I called you—"

"What did you call me, Hope?"

"You will not be angry?—It was only because your name is like the names in the old ballads—I called you the Laird's Lilias."

"So my name reminded you of the Laird's Jock, and the Laird's Wat, did it, Hope?" said Lilias, smiling; "but it is an excellent title you give me, for I should have been a very solitary sad Lilias, but for the Laird;—and was Miss Buchanan sorry for me because I was alone?"

"She never said that," said Hope, honestly, "because Helen is always alone herself—only she is with her mother."

Lilias walked on silently and put her hand over her eyes : how great a difference did that brief sentence make !

Helen Buchanan's scholars were flocking out when Hope and Lilias reached the house. There was a considerable number of them, from awkward hoydens of Hope's own years, whose shyness their graceful teacher had mellowed into something not unhandsome, down to little sunburnt fairies of four or five, who, spite of clogs and coarse dresses, had still the unconscious charm of childhood upon them, and needed no mellowing. They all knew Hope, and with her were much more friendly than deferential, for Hope with her buoyant spirits and frank young life could not always be kept within the bounds of the circle of Misses who were proper acquaintances for the Banker's daughter ; and most of them had heard of the young lady of Mossgray. Some, touched with reverence for the paleness of Lilias' face, saluted her with a shame-faced curtsy ; the rest hung back, crowding upon each other in little groups, and looked at her with curiosity only softened by their shyness—for all were shy. The young teacher, like the poet, had a sympathy for "sweet shame-facednesse," and thought it sat well upon children ; so that she rather cherished than found fault with the native bashfulness of her pupils. People think otherwise in these precocious days ; but the little ones in Fendie are happily still shy.

Helen sat in her presiding chair in the school-room with thumbed books and copies, and slates covered with armies of sprawling figures heaped upon the table before her. She was leaning her head upon her hand and looking somewhat wearied ; the lessons were over for the day, for the placid work of sewing—a most weary one to the young practitioners—occupied the afternoon. There was a certain mist upon her face, and she sighed. Her sky was rather wayward at this present time, and had various passing shadows ; and though her mother had already two or three times called her to the parlour, Helen still lingered alone—not that she was thinking deeply or painfully ; her changeful nature had times which did not think at all, and in the mist of an unconscious reverie, slightly sad, but which a single touch could raise into buoyant exhilaration or depress into melancholy, she sat by the large work-table in the empty school-room leaning her head upon her hand.

"Helen," said Hope Oswald, "this is Miss Maxwell."

Hope intended to add something pretty—to say that they were like each other, and should be friends; but it would not do, for Hope too, after her own peculiar fashion, was shy; so she withdrew abruptly and left her friends to improve their acquaintance by themselves.

“I am very glad to see you, Miss Maxwell,” said Helen, earnestly; and then she too stopped and became embarrassed, and looked at the door for her mother—but her mother did not come: and Helen glanced up with admiration and quick liking into the quiet pensive face whose steadiness she could not but envy, and felt her own variable countenance burn as she repeated,—“indeed I am very glad to see you.”

“You are very kind,” said the composed and gentle Lillas, who was less swiftly moved than Helen. “Hope told me you had compassion on my solitude, Miss Buchanan, and encouraged me to ask you to cheer it;—and I had confidence in Hope.”

“But you must have no confidence in Hope as regards us,” said Helen, recovering herself, “for Hope is my sworn knight, and has been my mother’s favourite all her life:—will you come and see my mother?”

Mrs Buchanan was prepared for them by Hope’s kind warning, and had little more than time to remove some small matters of preparation for their simple mid-day meal from the fire, when the famed young lady of Mossgray entered the parlour with Helen.

And then as Lillas, the motherless, received the cheerful kindly greeting which people call *motherly*, Helen saw that the face of the Lily of Mossgray was not an unexpressive one; that the large dark blue eyes were cast down to hide unshed tears, and that even in the pleasure which Mrs Buchanan’s welcome gave her, the anguish of the solitary and desolate came over the orphan’s heart.

They were soon friends—friends so warmly and speedily that Hope Oswald started in glad surprise when Mrs Buchanan invited Lillas to remain with them, until it should be time for Mrs Oswald’s juvenile Hallowe’en party, and Lillas consented with goodwill. Here was a master-stroke! To have the Lily of Mossgray, at present the admired of all admirers, come direct from the humble house of Helen Buchanan! Hope repeated to herself as she went home the commendation of Miss Swinton, and ventured to believe it true.

"What will my father think?" mused Hope; and she hurried to the office to beg him, as an especial favour, himself to come with her to the grocer's to lay in a stock of nuts for the important transactions of the evening.

"Wait till after dinner, Hope," said the banker, graciously; and Hope waited till after dinner; then, when the lights began to shine out one after another in the main street of Fendie—the more dignified shops of Fendie are resplendent in the glories of gas—and Hope was quite sure that her friend Adelaide would be getting ready to start, and that she herself would scarcely have time to assume the new silk frock which Mrs Oswald feared could not fail to receive extensive damage. This evening, her father at last was ready to accompany her, and they proceeded to make their important purchase.

There was a good deal of the mist of frost in the bracing, pleasant air; but high above the haze was a cold, distinct, full moon. It did not cast down a very clear light however through the veil which hung between the earth and the sky, and the youngsters in the Main Street of Fendie decidedly preferred the shop-windows.

Opposite the important shop of Mr Elliot Bell, the principal grocer of Fendie, a group of little girls were enjoying themselves in the bright spot illuminated by the lights within. They were performing one of those childish dramas which look like relics of some early stage not without a certain art in their construction. Who that has had the good fortune to be born a girl in Scotland does not remember the monotonous expectancy of the first act, and the quite startling nature of the last in that famous play of "Janet Jo?" It made rather a pretty scene in the quiet street of Fendie. A pile of packing-cases and empty boxes standing securely in a street innocent of thieves because the premises of the great drapers, Messrs Scott and Armstrong, had no room for them, formed the back-ground; demurely arranged in the shelter of these stood a row of little girls; while advancing and retiring before them was another line of little figures, keeping time to their chant. The light shone pleasantly upon the small, sparkling faces—every Jean and Mary, and Maggie among them, had been already summoned by their respective mothers, but the play was not played out, and the young performers remained at their post. The banker stood at Mr Elliot Bell's door with his daughter, very graciously pleased and admiring. The other part of the street lay in

shadow; the soft, brown haze faintly lighted by the moonbeams hung between them and the serene unclouded sky, and through the mist, the spire of the church at the other end of the street shot strangely up, making its sharp point visible against the clear, blue arch above; and the sweet voices of the children, in their monotonous chant, were in harmony with the time.

The banker was not easily moved by the æsthetics of common life; but the society of his favourite melted his heart.

"Where have these children learned to move so gracefully, Hope?" asked Mr Oswald, in the incautiousness of his gracious mood; "they might have been with the French dancing-master, whom your friend Adelaide speaks so much about."

"The French dancing-master, papa!" exclaimed Hope; "he could not make people graceful. Adelaide Fendie is not graceful; she only knows how to put her feet—"

Mr Oswald laughed.

"Well then, Hope, what about these little girls?—it must be natural to them."

Hope began to tremble as she adventured her first direct experiment.

"I think I know what it is, father."

"Well, Hope?"

"It's because—because they have a gentlewoman to teach them," said the brave Hope, with a considerable tremor.

Mr Oswald looked grave and frowned; he had lost his interest in the children; but his frown only provoked the bold spirit of his favourite daughter, who knew her own power.

"They are only common people's children," continued Hope, with a good deal of warmth; "but they have a gentlewoman to teach them, papa; and Miss Swinton says that is the way to make people graceful. I am sure it is too—for if you only saw the girls who are not with Helen Buchanan!—because it's not being rich that does any good;—people might have all the money in the world, and only be common people; but Helen Buchanan is a gentlewoman born!"

The banker wisely withdrew into the shop, and, busying himself about the nuts, pretended not to have noticed the energetic speech which made Hope's cheek burn and her eyes glow in the delivery. Mr Oswald was considerably afraid, for he saw that Hope was by no means an antagonist

to be despised, and did not well know how to meet her fiery charges. Hope was indifferent about the nuts : she had begun her campaign, and felt all the glow and excitement of her first declaration of war.

In the mean time, Lilius Maxwell had settled down quietly into her corner of Mrs Buchanan's parlour. The rapid sympathy of Helen had already gathered up the loneliness, the wants and yearnings of the orphan, and all that were in sorrow had an unfailing claim upon the pity and tenderness of her mother. The calm face, so pensive and pale, and thoughtful, and the unquiet face with its constant life and motion, contrasted strangely, so near to each other ; but their diverse currents of life had yet many points of harmony. Each was the only child of her mother : each had the self-knowledge which comes in solitude, and as they talked together, each came to recognise thoughts like her own, in a guise and form so different, that strange smiles almost mirthful brightened even the face of Lilius as they grew familiar. The stranger very soon ceased to be a stranger then, for even Mossgray was not so like home.

CHAPTER XI.

The auld guidwife's weelhoordet nits
 Are round and round divided,
 And monie lads and lasses' fates
 Are there that night decided.
 Some kindle, couthy, side by side,
 An' burn thegither trimly,
 Some start awa' wi' saucy pride
 An' jump out owre the chimlie
 Fu' high that night.—HALLOWE'EN.

THE juvenile party had assembled in Mrs Oswald's drawing-room. The Fendies of Mount Fendie, the Maxwells of Firthside, the son and daughter of Dr Elliot, who rented Greenshaw, and several other scions of rural magnates. Hope had a secret feeling that she would have liked an auxiliary party of Helen Buchanan's scholars in the kitchen, and should have had much better fun with them

than among the young ladies and the young gentlemen, with their incipient flirtations and full dress.

The eldest Miss Maxwell of Firthside was eighteen; she sat apart and dignified beside Mrs Oswald and Lillas on a sofa, thinking William Oswald a great lout, and herself much too important a person to countenance the follies of "the children." Lillas did not think so; but their gay laughter and active sport made her shrink now and then, and by its very contrast recalled her grief.

The banker was very gracious to Lillas. He had some indefinite hope that she might possibly withdraw William from his foolish fancy. He hoped her walk from Mossgray had not wearied her.

"Oh no," said Lillas, "I have had a long rest. Hope has done me the favour to make a very important addition to my list of Fendie friends to-day."

Hope paused in the midst of the tumult of burning nuts to listen. Her father glanced at her quickly with an eye which presaged a storm. Hope drew herself up and defied it.

"I have been in Mrs Buchanan's since the morning—do you know her, Mrs Oswald?"

"Yes, I know her," said Mrs Oswald, quietly, with secret satisfaction, only less warm than Hope's. "Mrs Buchanan is an old friend of mine. You liked her, no doubt?"

"Perhaps one must be alone as I have been," said Lillas, faltering slightly, "before one can know what a pleasure it is—I mean, to be in the atmosphere of a mother; but Hope's Helen, Mrs Oswald—I wonder I have been here so long, and have not heard of her before."

"That will be the Miss Buchanan that keeps the school," interrupted Miss Maxwell of Firthside.

Lillas smiled.

"If you knew her you would not need that distinction, though it is a very good one; but one runs no risk of losing her, Miss Maxwell, though all the other Miss Buchanans in Scotland were congregated in Fendie."

"Oh, is she so pretty?" asked the young lady, with some curiosity.

William Oswald stood at some distance, leaning upon the mantelpiece. At his feet little Agnes Elliot looked up, vainly pleading that he would put those two nuts, representing herself and Harry Stewart of Fairholm, into some safe corner of the ruddy fire; but William had no ear for little Agnes.

The banker sat in a great chair near his wife's sofa, looking, as he wished it to appear, towards the young merry-makers round the fire-place, and pretending to be extremely indifferent to the conversation, but listening with all his might.

"It is not that she is pretty," said Lillas; "I cannot tell what the charm is—but the charm is great, I know. Hope, you know Miss Buchanan best—tell Miss Maxwell what it is."

"But, Miss Maxwell, I am sure you know better than me," said Hope, dubiously, her triumph checked by fear, lest her own powers of description should fail. "I don't know what it is except it is just because Helen is a gentlewoman."

Miss Maxwell of Firthside elevated her good-looking small head, with its *nez retroussé*, and looked contemptuous. Mr Oswald pushed back his chair hastily.

"Hope is very right," said Lillas; "but there are gentlewomen, many of them, to whom nothing could give that singular refinement. It is not conventional grace of manner at all, either; one cannot tell what it is."

"Is that Miss Buchanan? Oh, I know her—I know her!" cried one of the Firthside boys. "She hit me once; but I think I like her for all that."

"Miss Buchanan struck you?" said his sister. "What did she do that for?"

"Oh, I'll tell you, Georgina!" said a smaller youth. "He was hitting Robbie Carlyle's cuddie with his switch—he's a cuddie himself—he was hitting me just before; and the young lady came up and took the switch from him and lounded him. Oh, didn't he deserve it!"

"She didna lounder me!" cried the first speaker, indignantly, forgetting in his haste that his vernacular should not be spoken before ears polite. "She only hit me once, and laughed, and asked me how I likit it. She never hurt me; and we're good friends now."

"Is that a way to speak, Hector?" cried the young lady-sister, in dismay. "What a vulgar boy you are!"

Hope with difficulty restrained a retort as to the superior elegance of our kindly Scottish tongue, when little Agnes Elliot came running forward with the nuts which William Oswald could not be induced to put into the fire for her.

"This is Harry Stewart, and this is me," said the innocent little Agnes, too young yet to have any sort of bash-

fulness about her juvenile sweetheart, "and if you please, Hope, will you put them in?"

Hope put them in as she was requested, and Hope also placed another couple of nuts in the glowing heat of the fire, and stood watching them with much anxiety. There were a great many eager gazers about the hearth—a great many youthful fates were being determined; but Hope's nuts were still burning merrily when the destiny of all the others had been sealed. "Who is it, Hope? who is it?" cried blythe voices on every side; but Hope closed her lips firmly and shook her head, and would not tell.

"Oh, I know!" said Hector Maxwell; "it's Hope and me—Hope's burning herself and me!"

Hope's indignant denial was lost in the general chorus—"Hope's burning herself and Hector Maxwell!" Hope was very much offended; she pushed the joyous Hector away, and scolded little Agnes Elliot; it was too bad; but she still stood perseveringly by the fire, watching the nuts: they were at the most dangerous stage, and there was still the risk of one starting from the side of the other.

The crisis past; lovingly they subsided together into white ashes.

"It's William and Helen, Miss Maxwell," whispered Hope, secretly clapping her hands, and Lillias was prepared for the revelation, and received it with becoming gravity.

All the young faces in the room were red and glowing; they were tired of burning nuts, and Mrs Oswald's old nurse, Tibbie, was brought in state from the kitchen to superintend and interpret the mysterious process of "dropping the egg."

"Oh, goodness!" cried Victoria Fendie, "look—look! it's a sword and a grand cocked hat—isn't it, Tibbie? and that's for our Adelaide. I wonder what it means."

"A cocked hat!" said Hector Maxwell, indignantly, "it's more like a triangle—the thing the showfolk play tunes on; and a sword!—it's the bow of a fiddle."

"Whiskt!" said Tibbie, "it's just a sword; and what should it mean, bairns; just that Miss Adie's to get a grand sodger officer—see if I dinna say true."

Adelaide Fendie blushed her dull blush, and whispered,—

"Oh, Hope, do you think she knows?"

"She knows what it looks like," said Hope.

But Adelaide was not satisfied.

"Do you not think she knows more than that? Oh, Hope, what if it was to come true?"

Hope laughed; but it was her own turn now, to watch the mysterious evolutions of the egg.

"It's a ship! it's a ship!" cried Hector Maxwell, in an ecstasy. "Tibbie, I am sure you meant this for me."

"Never you heed, Maister Hector," said the oracular Tibbie; "it's Miss Hope's; but you're to get her, ye ken, so it's a' ane."

Hope swept away in high disdain from Hector's vicinity.

"Tibbie," she whispered, "try one for a young lady; she is not here, but I like her, and I'll tell you after who she is."

Tibbie obeyed.

"It's like a book," cried Victoria.

"It's a letter," said Hector.

"Oh, Tibbie, what does it mean?" inquired the perplexed Hope.

Tibbie was slightly puzzled too; the rules of her simple art gave her no assistance.

"Well, bairns, I canna just tell—wait a minute. Ay, Miss Hope, that's it—the young lady will get her fortune out of a book."

"Out of a book, Tibbie?"

"Deed, ay, Miss Hope; we're no to ken hoo till the time comes—but see if she disna get her fortune out of a book."

Hope drew back to cogitate; she could make nothing of this mysterious deliverance of Tibbie's.

By and by, Adam Graeme's old-fashioned, brown-hooded conveyance (all classes of vehicles are called by the generic name, conveyance, in Fendie), driven by "Mossgray's man," Saunders Delvie, arrived to take Lillas home. Hope accompanied her to the door.

"If you please, Miss Maxwell," said Hope, "will you see Helen sometimes when I am away?"

"Yes, Hope," answered Lillas.

"And, Miss Maxwell, will you just speak of her sometimes before my father—I don't mean to my father—but you know what I mean."

"Yes, Hope," repeated Lillas, "I shall do what I can; don't be afraid, and now good-bye."

The carriage drove off, but Hope still lingered at the door, looking down the dim, hazy, quiet street. There were very

few passengers, but as she stood looking out, she perceived a certain tall, plaided figure rapidly advancing upon the opposite side, in shadow of the houses. Hope turned and shut the door in sudden wrath. What could the Reverend Robert Insches have to do at the "townend" on this Hallowe'en night? It looked suspicious; he had been seeing Helen Buchanan!

The next morning early, Hope herself traversed the same road to bid Helen good-bye. The coach started at eleven, and it was only a little after eight when Hope looked in upon Mrs Buchanan's breakfast-table. Helen looked in excellent spirits; the ring of her pleasant laugh had reached Hope's ear before she opened the parlour-door.

"Do you like Miss Maxwell, Helen?" inquired Hope.

"Very much, Hope," was the quick answer; "we shall be excellent friends."

"Because she likes you, Helen," continued Hope. "If you had only heard her last night, Mrs Buchanan."

The blood flushed at once over Helen's face. It was not disagreeable to be praised—not even before the Oswalds; but it excited pride as well as curiosity.

"Helen," resumed Hope, "Mr Insches comes here very often, does he not?" Hope looked immensely jealous.

Helen did not answer; there was some annoyance, and a good deal of mirth upon her face.

"Yes, Hope," said Mrs Buchanan, sedately, "Mr Insches is a good lad. He visits far better than any minister that has been in Fendie since I came."

"Ah, but he does not visit everybody else as often as he visits you!" exclaimed the jealous Hope. "Helen, do you like him?"

The merry ring of Helen's laugh did not by any means please Hope this morning.

"Surely," she said; "why should I not like him, Hope?"

"Ah, I don't mean that," said Hope; "but—I am sure you don't *care* for him, Helen?"

Helen blushed again; but her answer was more satisfactory this time.

"No, indeed, Hope; not the very least in the world."

"Mr Insches is a fine lad," repeated Mrs Buchanan, significantly.

"Oh yes, so is everybody," said Hope; "but do you

know, Mrs Buchanan, I think he thinks he is good-looking."

"And so he is, Hope."

"But he is a man, and a minister! what right has he to think about such a thing?"

Mrs Buchanan shook her head, and did not refuse to smile; for men and ministers too have their vanities.

"Helen," said Hope, "I made our Tibbie try your fortune last night, and what do you think it was? We could not make it out at first, but Tibbie said it was a book; and you're to get your fortune out of a book. Now, mind, and we'll just see what happens—and, Helen, I burnt you."

The unquiet face grew suddenly grave, and flushed over cheek and brow with the hot blush of pride; the tone changed in a moment.

"Did you, Hope? you were very cruel."

"Oh, but you know that's not what I mean!" said Hope; "and, Helen, you need not be angry at me."

"Who did you burn with Helen, Hope?" said Mrs Buchanan.

Hope dared not answer; and yet there was some curiosity in the kindled indignation of that strangely moving face.

"It is time for me to go away," said Hope, disconsolately. "Good-bye, Mrs Buchanan; and, Helen, you need not be angry when I am just going away."

Helen rose and accompanied her favourite to the door.

"I am not angry, Hope; but you must never speak of me again at home; mind—or I shall be very much offended."

"Why?" said Hope, boldly.

But it was not quite so easy to answer why.

"Because I shall promise if you will tell me the reason," said the sensible Hope.

But Helen could give no reason; so she bit her lip and looked half angry, and laughed.

"Do you know, Hope, I begin to think you are to be very clever," she said at last.

"Miss Swinton says I am sensible," said Hope, steadily; "and when you have no reason, why should you be angry?—but mind, you are to get your fortune out of a book; and now I must go away."

The farewell was said, and Hope gone; but Helen still stood leaning over the garden-gate, looking after her

with an embarrassed smile upon her face. It was a sunny morning, though the haze of the beginning frost was still in the air; the morning always brought new hopes and a buoyant upspringing to the elastic nature of Helen Buchanan, and she felt more than usually light-hearted to-day. As was her habit, she revealed this in every unconscious movement. Mrs Buchanan knew by the very measure of her step as she reëntered the house, that there was no mist in her sunny atmosphere—no cloud upon her sky. A certain shy pleasure hovered upon her face, prompting her to laugh at sundry times, with embarrassed uncertain gladness, and swaying about the colour in her cheek, as a mist is swayed by the wind. It did not seem certainly that Hope Oswald had much offended her.

But it was not that; neither was it the evident pleasure which the young minister, who thought himself good-looking, found in Mrs Buchanan's humble parlour, nor yet the friendship of Lillias Maxwell. The bright nature did indeed in its own warm alembic combine all these together, and draw from them a certain exhilaration; but itself in the involuntary elasticity which was its best inheritance was the source of its own happiness. A rare and precious gift, chequered as it was with the infinite variety of shadows, and all the depths of sudden depression which calmer spirits could not know.

But it was very true that the Reverend Robert Insches had called very many times of late on Mrs Buchanan, and that Helen talked to him as she would have talked to any indifferent acquaintance, in her own varied wayward fashion, and that the young minister seemed exceedingly glad to respond; whereupon Mrs Buchanan, in spite of her great favour for William Oswald, began to perceive more clearly the obstacles which stood between Helen and him, and to grow more indignant at his father. His father, the harsh, stern man whose rigid strength had done so much injury to her gentle husband, and who now cast his severe shadow over the lot of her daughter. And William had been long in possession of the field; it pleased the good mother to see it entered by another competitor, and if ordinary signs held good, a competitor the Reverend Robert Insches was beginning to be.

All this was very true; but very true it was also that Helen was supremely indifferent to the good looks of the

youthful minister, and that the Reverend Robert himself had by no means decided whether he had or had not any "intentions" respecting the young schoolmistress of Fendie. She *was* the schoolmistress; to call her by the more ornamental name of teacher or governess would not do; and the Reverend Robert was himself of somewhat plebeian origin, and knew how apt congregations are to scrutinize the pedigree and breeding of a new minister's wife. So he was wise though he was fascinated, and Mrs Buchanan was a little premature.

But Hope Oswald, on the journey to Edinburgh, contrived to let the banker know how assiduously the minister visited her friend, and had the consolation to perceive that her arrow did not miss its mark. It by no means weakened the resolution which the obstinate man had formed in respect to the daughter of his former friend; but acting upon the suggestive praise of Lilius Maxwell, it gave him a little misgiving about the wisdom of his unalterable decision. It was humiliating to make a mistake, but the very possibility made him cling more closely to his obstinate resolve. He would never receive Walter Buchanan's daughter—never! He had fulminated his sentence on the matter once, and it was decided as the Medes and Persians decide—beyond the power of change.

CHAPTER XII.

I would not have a speck rest on his fame
Not if it gave me kingdoms—
'Tis very true that I am poor and friendless,
But think you for that reason I would steal
Kinsman and lands from yet another orphan?
No, no—ah, no!

LILIAS MAXWELL sat in the old-fashioned window-seat of the Mossgray drawing-room busy with some household sewing. It was an appropriate work then, with its licence of unlimited thought, though it had often been unwholesome enough for the solitary orphan. She was looking forward now, in that freshness of feeling with which those look who,

after a long interregnum of pain, may again dare to turn their eyes to the future. Her heart was convalescent, and the haze of subdued sadness which remained about her present self made the prospect only the fairer. She was thinking of her guardian's delicate care of her, and of the one living voice which should yet thank him for his tenderness.

The old man upstairs in his study was reading one of his philosophical favourites with some restlessness, as a duty. He was slightly ashamed of himself for so much preferring the society of his young charge to that of his old, learned, constant friends. The dust that lay upon his scientific tools, and the unusual order and solemn regularity with which these folio and quarto inhabitants of his shelves were arranged, came upon him like a reproof. His hand rested upon the fanciful records of Bishop Berkeley's mystic system. Open before him lay the steadier disquisitions of a grave philosopher of Scotland. Upon the same table were some of those strange, wild charts which reveal to us the dreamy sea of German thought. The volumes round bore all on kindred subjects—writings of men who had given consistence to the reveries of the unformed world before their time, and of men who had but skill enough to spin their spider's thread about the obscure college or unknown scholar's cell in which they lived and died. Divine philosophy in its strength and its weakness encircled the Laird of Mossgray.

But from the high window of the projecting turret the ruddy winter sunshine stole in a line of dazzling light through the large low room. It was a mild day, so mild that the turret window was open, and the low hum of rural sounds ascended from beneath. Adam Graeme leant back in his chair, and looked at the steady line of sunlight, and forgot the philosophies of science. There rose in the gentle soul of the old man philosophies of older date than these, born before ever the restless mind of humanity had investigated its own formation or classified its feelings.

"The same sound is in mine ears
Which in those days I heard."

Wonderful sights and sounds of nature unchangeable in all their varying—wonderful human heart which twines its memories about them, and growing old, dwells in the past, by aid of the great earth and greater sun!

By the fireside stood an old carved chair; the room was

so much the hermitage of its owner, that its furniture was very scanty; there was no accommodation for any companionship; but when every other article in the room was piled with books, this solitary chair remained always unencumbered. For years it had stood in the same position, turned towards the fire, its high carved back standing up, a kind of gloomy screen against the light. This day its position had been slightly altered, and the sunshine streaming in, threw its fantastic gilding over the antique carving and faded old embroidery of the unused seat. The old man started slightly as his eye fell upon it, and it was some time before he recollected himself. Lillias had been in the study early this morning, and she it was who had, unconsciously, made this alteration.

It was the chair of Charlie Graeme. This room, now the study of the thoughtful, aged man, had been the favourite haunt of the schoolboy cousins long ago. Rusty armour, and heavy swords and axes, borne by the chiefs of Mossgray, when peace was unknown upon the Border, hung still upon the low bare walls, and in one corner a pile of youthful implements, fishing-rods and the like, still bore witness to the different occupations once pursued under its roof; through all these long intervening years, since the household traitor left for the last time the house of the trustful friend, to whom his lost honour brought so severe a pang, "Charlie's chair" remained as he had left it, unoccupied by the solitary fireside. Now for the first time the sunlight slanted on this relic of the false man, and Mossgray sat with his eyes fixed upon it, thinking of the dead.

That morning he had received a letter from the Reverend Matthew Monikie, the pragmatical licentiate of the church, who kept the Aberdeenshire school, where Charlie's son had spent his youth. The letter was formally written, as became the man's profession, age, and character, with deductions somewhat authoritative. Halbert Graeme was nearly one and twenty; it was absolutely necessary, Mr Monikie represented, that some provision should be made for his future life; that he should be placed in some situation where he could maintain himself.

Mossgray had made a resolution, and was determined to keep it. The son of Charlie Graeme should never be heir to the house in which his father had meditated so much treachery; it was better than the line of the old race should be utterly

extinguished, than that it should spring anew from a stock which displayed so much guile, and falsehood, and dishonour. Mossgray resolved to continue the yearly allowance he had given this youth, and to refuse him no specific aid or influence which he asked; but, "Let him not enter my presence," repeated the old man; "let me not be brought into contact with one whose motives I cannot trust, whose conduct may steel my heart both against himself and others. I wish him well, but let him not come near me."

It was unjust: it was almost the single conscious injustice with which even his own conscience could tax Adam Graeme of Mossgray, and in consequence he tried to banish it from his mind. As he sat thus musing, a melting of the heart came upon him. He could almost fancy, as he saw the sunbeams stealing over Charlie's chair, that Charlie himself had risen from it even now.

Very shortly afterwards he joined Liliass. She was still sitting in the deep window-seat of the cheerful, old-fashioned drawing-room. The ruddy sunbeams just touched her pale head with a shadowy glory; her fingers were busily employed, her mind no less active. Not as Helen Buchanan would have done in the vivid dreams which took possession of her less serene spirit, but in the flush of a tranquil, gentle hope, weaving the mystic thread of her imagined destiny over the unknown future which lay before her.

"Liliass," said her guardian, when they had been for some time engaged in conversation less personal, "I am the last of my race, but I have a fancy that I should like ill to be the last of my name. When I was as young as you are, there seemed to me a peculiar charm and grace in the name I would have you bear—you must be Liliass Graeme."

"Gladly, if it pleases you, Mossgray," answered Liliass.

"It pleases me," said the old man, with his gentle smile; "it is strange how sometimes, Liliass, we have our early fancies realized in a way which, could we foresee it when we form them, we should think bitter mockery. This name! well, but the years fall tranquilly, and do a good work in the content they bring. I think they bring content—acquiescence at least in what Providence sends us."

"Is it always so?" said Liliass. She was thinking of her fretful, repining father, whose discontent was not allayed by years.

"I think so," said Mossgray: "we resist when we are

strong, but when this gentle hand of decay droops over us, we learn to think that what has befallen us was, after all, the best ; but I did not intend to discuss melancholy matters with you, and youthful people, as I remember, think all sad that relates to the end. When that comes, Liliās—when you yourself are the lady of this old stronghold of the Graemes, remember that you have promised to bear their name.”

Liliās laid down her work and looked steadily into her guardian’s face.

“You shall call me by what name you please, but you must not give me Mossgray.”

The old man shook his head and smiled.

“No, no !” exclaimed Liliās, hastily ; “you have given me a home in my extremity—more than that, you have given me such kindness as perhaps no other in the world could give. You have been my protector, my true father, and I thank you with all my heart ; but there is no gift you can give me now half so precious as those I have received already. You have made me your child ; after this I will take no inferior gift, not though it is all your land. I will be Liliās Graeme your daughter ; but only while Mossgray is *your* home must it be mine.”

Mossgray laid his hand gently on the young head which was inspired with energy so unusual.

“I thank you, my good Liliās ; but even on your own showing you must take my inheritance ; for I can have no heir so fitting as my own child.”

“Mossgray,” said Liliās, “you are not the last of your race.”

A slight colour passed over the old man’s face.

“You are right, Liliās,” he said, gravely, “there is yet one Graeme remaining of the blood ; but even you must not speak to me of him.”

Her face had been lifted to him full of eagerness : when he said that her countenance fell—she was silent.

“Nay,” said her guardian, kindly, “I do not mean that there is anything, Liliās, of which you may not speak to me with the utmost freedom ; but this youth, this Halbert—you do not and cannot know how strong my reasons are for resolving never to see him, nor to suffer his presence at Mossgray.”

“Is it for himself ; has he displeased you himself, Mossgray ?” asked Liliās, with some timidity.

Adam Graeme sat down near her, and met her shy glance with his own benign, unclouded smile.

"We will speak of him no more, Lillas, if you are afraid."

"No, no, I am not afraid," said Lillas, hurriedly; "but you must let me be proud—for myself and for you."

The old man smiled again.

"Surely, Lillas, if you will tell me how and why."

"For myself," said Lillas, with some tremor in her voice, "because I would fain have you believe, Mossgray, that it is your own tenderness I prize, and not any gift—not any inheritance."

"I believe it already, Lillas—I need no proof."

"And besides," continued Lillas, "for everybody—all our neighbours—the haill water," Mossgray. "I must vindicate myself. I cannot have these good people think ill of me. They know you have given me everything I have; but they must not fancy that I grasp at all."

"Hush, Lillas," said the old man, "I cannot hear this. Well, I permit your own pride: it becomes you well enough; and now for me."

"And for you, Mossgray," said Lillas. "I am jealous that any one should have cause to say that once in your life you dealt unjustly—that you alienated his inheritance from one of your own blood because your kind heart had compassion on a stranger. I could not hear this said. For the very name's sake which you say I am to bear, I would shrink from such a reproach as this."

"It is unjust," said the old man. "I almost believe you, Lillas; but suppose that I knew, and were sure, that far greater dishonour would come to the name, if Halbert Graeme inherited Mossgray, than could fall upon me for disowning him—what then? Would you still advise me to bestow all I have upon the son of a treacherous, false man?"

"I do not know him," said Lillas; "if he does otherwise than well, I am grieved for himself; but it has no effect upon me—it does not alter the right and the wrong; and you, Mossgray, who have never done injustice!"

"How have you heard, Lillas, of Halbert Graeme?" said the old man. "Did you ever meet him in your wanderings that you plead his cause so warmly?"

"No—oh, no. I have only heard of him, principally here at home, where they cannot forget that he is a son of the house," said Lillas; "and some one has brought them word

that he is good and generous, and worthy to be your successor. Will you not see with your own eyes whether it is so ? ”

“ You are a Quixote, Lillas,” said Mossgray, “ you have the epidemic generosity of youth upon you just now. When you are old, you will be wiser, perhaps—who can tell ?—than to throw away your own prospects for the sake of a stranger whom you never saw.”

“ I do not know that it is well to be so wise,” said Lillas ; “ and I shall not learn from you, Mossgray.”

“ In this point I cannot answer for myself,” said the old man. “ I have had an experience bitterer than usual ; but let us not speak of that : we have had enough of Halbert Graeme. Who are to be your guests, Lillas, in our first essay at hospitality ? have you determined ? ”

“ I specially beg an invitation for only one,” said Lillas ; “ and perhaps I do ill to ask that ; but—I remember what it is to be poor and alone.”

“ And who is your one guest ? ” said Mossgray.

“ It is Helen Buchanan ;—you have seen her, Mossgray ; she is only a humble teacher in Fendie : but she is—”

“ I know her,” said the courteous Adam Graeme, to whom the word gentlewoman was, as to Hope Oswald, the highest of feminine titles. “ Why should you hesitate to invite her, Lillas ? ”

“ Because,” said Lillas, with a smile, “ the young ladies, the young landed ladies, Mossgray, may think her not good enough to meet them ; but I made a promise to Hope Oswald to do what I could to honour Helen in the presence of Hope’s father.”

“ So Hope begins to scheme,” said Mossgray, smiling ; “ and the cause, Lillas ? ”

“ I think it has some connection with Mr William Oswald ; indeed, Mrs Oswald almost told me that his father’s very stern resolution alone prevents—”

“ I understand,” said the old man, as Lillas hesitated and blushed with a not unnatural sympathy. “ His father’s resolution—pooh ! his father will break it.”

“ Do you think so, Mossgray ? ”

“ I begin to think, Lillas,” said Mossgray, turning to leave the room, “ that resolutions are made only to be broken. May it fare with Mr Oswald as it has done with me ; but remember,” and the old man looked back from the door with

some humour in his face, "I do not mean in the matter of Halbert Graeme."

He did not mean it—he was still *resolved*; and yet when he returned to his study, it was to look long at the declining sunlight as it gilded the ancient carvings of Charlie's chair, and to think gently of the dead. A certain poetic, half-superstitious feeling, which became him well, hindered him from restoring to its original position the old seat of Charlie Graeme. He suffered the sunshine to dwell upon it like a reconciling smile.

CHAPTER XIII.

Marry, he hath a proper person, a brain indifferent well garnished; comes of a good lineage; hath a bold spirit; poor, I deny not; but what doth your young gallant propose to himself, I pray you, but to try a wrestle and a fall with Fortune?—OLD PLAY.

On the same evening the Edinburgh coach, when it arrived at the door of the George Inn, at Fendie, deposited there a young adventurer fresh from the far North. He had been travelling on the outside of the coach, and was benumbed with cold, though his face glowed from contact with the wind. A small portmanteau was the extent of his luggage, and beyond that his worldly possessions were of the smallest; good looks, good blood, an honest heart, a happy temper, and five one-pound notes in the end of a blue silken purse—he had nothing more.

It was no great amount of capital with which to begin the arduous struggle of life; and upon his glowing healthful face there sat a little anxiety, which was not by any means care. He had one special and particular aim in this journey, but if it failed, how many means of success yet offered themselves to the young, hopeful, ingenuous spirit, with the world lying all before him, where to choose.

The stranger hastily entered the inn and ordered some very simple refreshments. It was his first considerable journey, and the youth was not without the natural shyness which attends those who have passed all their lives in the quietness of one domestic circle. When he had discussed the

inexpensive meal placed before him, and thoroughly thawed himself before the fire, and resolved one of his pound notes into shillings by the payment of his bill, the young man, much to the surprise of the waiter at the George, began to button his great-coat once more.

"Do you know," he inquired, "how far it is to Mossgray?—there is a place called Mossgray in the neighbourhood, is there not?"

The waiter answered readily in the affirmative, with the addition that it was "maybes, a mile," and an inquiry if the gentleman would want a conveyance.

The gentleman thought he should not—a mile was no great distance—and requested his attendant to direct him how to go.

The waiter, encouraged by seeing the portmanteau left behind, graciously complied. The youth's appearance was frank and prepossessing, and the waiter at the George was a good-humoured fellow, so he extended his courtesy so far as to look out upon the idlers round the door—it was the evening of the market-day—and ask,—

"Is there any of you gaun the road to Mossgray?"

John Brown, Mrs Fendie's factotum, was within hearing. He had been down making purchases at the market, and now, with his light cart moderately well filled, was about starting home. On hearing the question, he responded briskly,—

"Ay, I'm gaun to the Mount—wha's speiring?"

"Is't you, John Brown?" said the waiter; "there's a gentleman here, a stranger, that disna ken the road. He's gaun to Mossgray."

"If he's a decent lad," said the authoritative John, "I'll gie him a hurl if he likes; and if he's no a decent lad, or if he's ower proud to ride in a cart, if he can keep up wi' the powny, I'll let him see the road."

The stranger laughed, and having, as it seemed, no particular scruples of pride, sprang lightly up on the front of John's cart, and thanked him for the promised "hurl." It was a very frosty, chill night; John somewhat gruffly threw one of the rough home-made plaids, of which he had been making a cushion for himself, over the knees of the new-comer.

"Ye'll ken the Laird?" said John, as they emerged out of the Main Street.

"No—at least I have never seen him," said the young man.

John uttered a discontented "humph," and changed his tactics.

"It's a mair inviting place noo than it used to be, for young folk."

"Is it?" said the impracticable stranger. "I have never been at Mossgray."

"Ay," said John, dryly, fancying he was now sure of a more satisfactory answer; "but ye'll ken the young lady it's like?"

"The young lady!" exclaimed his companion in evident astonishment. "Is there a young lady at Mossgray?"

John Brown was brought to a stand-still—he was half angry at his failure.

"Ay, nae doubt there's a young lady; ye maunna hae been living nearhand here or ye would have heard of the young lady of Mossgray."

"You don't mean," said the young man, hurriedly, "that Mr Graeme is married?"

A long gruff laugh answered the question, to the considerable relief of the inquirer, before John was able to say,—

"Man, ye may ken mony things, but ye dinna ken the Laird!"

"No, indeed I do not," said the stranger, echoing John's laugh; "but pray tell me who the young lady is."

"Ye see," said John, "the Laird was to have been married langsyne—the time's past minding—it was lang or ever ye were born or heard tell o'; but ye'll no prevent the lass frae seeing somebody she likit better,—and a shilpit chield he was, no fit to haud the candle to Mossgray;—sae the short and the lang o't is, that the twaesome ran away, and the Laird was left without his bride, and took it sair to heart, as I have heard. Aweel, there was nae mair word o't till a young lady came to the Mount—that's where I am—to learn the young lasses the kind of havers that's guid enough for the like o' them; and wha should this be but the daughter of the Laird's auld joe, and nae suner was't found out, than she behoved to gang hame to Mossgray, and as muckle wark made about her as if she had been a crowned head, let alane a bit peenging lassie: and there she's been, ever since, mistress and mair. The word gangs that she'll get a' the land; but I canna think that Mossgray would pass ower his ain bluid

for a stranger, and they say there are some of the name to the fore yet."

The young man made no answer, and just at this crisis John Brown pulled up his horse opposite a lane which sloped down to the waterside.

"Ye see yon light? it's in the Laird's study, for he's an awfu' feelosophical man. Yon's Mossgray; if ye hand straight down ye canna miss't."

There was only the partial light of the moon to guide the stranger, as he turned the sudden angle of one of the accumulated buildings, which formed the house of Mossgray. Dimly seen, and in glimpses, as these clouds flitted across the moon, the old house looked grand and imposing to the inexperienced eyes eagerly gazing upon it. A thrill of family pride, the first he had ever felt, made the young man draw himself up, and hold his head higher, as he looked at the heavy bulk of the old tower rising between him and the sky. In the projecting turret high up yonder, and from the small deep windows in its rugged wall, gleams the light which John Brown pointed out. The Laird's study—the heart of the adventurer beat high, as he tried to prepare himself to meet this stern Laird, half dreaded, half defied.

Lower down in a more modern part of the house, from larger windows of some household sitting room, warm light was shining, and close beside the visitor as he stood surveying the dark mass of building, was the cheerful kitchen fire and lamp. The young man did not perceive that at the uncurtained kitchen window there were curious faces watching him. He lingered with natural hesitation before presenting himself to the unknown Mossgray, whose welcome was so dubious; but while he lingered, another face appeared at the low window near him. The old housekeeper, with excited curiosity, had come to see for herself who the intruder was. A loud exclamation aroused him.

"God preserve us!—we never did ye ill. Have ye come to warn us of our end, Charlie Graeme?"

He saw an aged face, strangely convulsed with terror, fall back upon the shoulder of a strong middle-aged woman who stood behind, as the shrill cry ceased; and hastily advancing, he discovered the kitchen door, and knocked. For some time his summons was not attended to; at last a decent gray-haired elderly man opened it, and looked out, not without timidity.

The young man asked for Mr Graeme, and was silently admitted.

In an old elbow-chair by the fire sat the housekeeper of Mossgray, hysterically wringing her withered hands.

"I never did him ill! Oh guid send he be come for me, and no for the innocent callant that he did enow mischief too, when he was in the flesh; but ye saw it, Saunders Delvie—ye saw the Appearance as weel as me."

"I tell ye, Auntie," said Janet, "it was nae Appearance; it was a mortal lad, as life-like as either you or me."

"Will you be so good as tell me," said the stranger, "if Mr Graeme is at home?"

The old woman sat stiffly erect, gazing at him with rigid terror.

"And where should the Laird be, I would like to ken," said Janet, testily, "but just in Mossgray?"

The young man smiled. The light of the fire fell full upon his ruddy, animated face. Mrs Mense's fears began to abate; he was no Appearance after all.

"Wha are ye?" asked the old woman, with some solemnity. "Tell me that you're no Charlie Graeme?"

"My name is Halbert," said the stranger. "It is my father you mean, and I am like him, I hear."

Mrs Mense rose, and advancing to the young representative of the Graemes, looked earnestly into his face. The youth's colour rose under the scrutiny, but the blush was accompanied by a good-humoured smile: the result was satisfactory.

"Guid grant that it prove what it looks—a true face," said the old woman as she turned away. "Take him up to the young lady—I'll tell Mossgray mysel; but no—bide a wee, Janet, I'll show the gentleman the road."

The penalty which he paid for entering the house by the kitchen door was the threading of various dark passages linked together by short flights of stairs. The old woman panted and lost her breath as she toiled on before him.

"These stairs must weary you," said Halbert, kindly; "had you not better direct me, and I will go on myself."

"Your father would have cared little for trouble to the like of me," said Mrs Mense, emphatically; "and you're a guid lad to mind; but I maun tell Mossgray mysel."

Lilias Maxwell sat alone, leaning upon a small table in the cheerful drawing-room. A desk stood near her, covered

with notes of invitation which she had been writing for the great party which her guardian insisted on giving in her honour. She had finished these, and was sitting, thoughtfully looking at a book before her, which she did not read. She was thinking of what she could do to help forward the cause of Halbert Graeme.

Just then the door opened, and Liliass started in surprise as Mrs Mense entered, followed by the young man, who, in his flutter of spirits, looked as he was—a remarkably handsome and prepossessing youth.

“I’m gaun to tell Mossgray,” said the housekeeper; “and, Miss Liliass, this is Mr Halbert Graeme.”

There was a little awkwardness at first, which the serene bearing and temper of Liliass got through perhaps scarcely so well as Helen Buchanan’s embarrassed frankness would have done; but they surmounted it, and talked about Halbert’s journey, while Mrs Mense laboriously panted up the old staircase of the tower, to the study of the Laird.

The Laird sat among his books not very attentive to them—his mind had wandered to other things; and by the fire-place stood Charlie’s chair, still turned towards the light—towards the faint pale moonbeams which, dimmed, but not quenched, by the artificial light, stole in like something spiritual across the dusky wall.

“Mr Adam,” said the old woman, advancing to the table in the strength of her unwonted agitation, “I have seen this night a face I never thought to see, under the roof-tree of Mossgray, or with my old e’en again. I have looked upon the face of your cousin, Charlie Graeme.”

Mossgray started nervously, and raised his head; that gray, pale, old man’s head, which to his faithful servant looked still young.

“I thought it was an Appearance sent to warn us of our end,” said Mrs Mense, solemnly, “and my heart failed me, Mossgray, because I kent, that whate’er your better spirit may have done, I had ne’er forgiven him, no when he was dead. But it was nae Appearance; the face is the face of a living man, and if it’s like him, it has that in it, that in his bravest days he never had. The lad’s face is a true face, Mr Adam. I have lived near fourscore years, and I have learned to ken.”

“Who is it, Nancy?” said Mossgray.

“He says they ca’ him Halbert Graeme. I pat him in

the big room beside Miss Lilies ; they're a bonnie couple as e'e could look upon, and he's Mr Charlie's son."

There was a brief struggle ; the old feeling of suspicion and distrust came up for a moment over the warm heart of Adam Graeme ; but, like all unnatural things, it was short-lived, and he recovered himself.

"I will judge him by his own merits," said the just Laird of Mossgray, "for long ago, Charlie Graeme, long ago, when your treachery was scarcely done, I forgave you."

A footstep on the stair interrupted the conversation in the drawing-room ; it brought the colour almost painfully to Halbert's cheek as he sat in anxious expectation, and when Mossgray entered the room, the youth rose and stood before him, hesitating and embarrassed. He scarcely observed the stateliness of the old man's demeanour ; he did not see how the face, which at first was only gravely courteous, softened and melted as it looked upon his own. Lilies interposed, as they stood silently looking at each other.

"Mossgray," she said, her calm face and tone restoring them both to self-possession, "this is Halbert Graeme."

And then the old man bade him welcome to Mossgray.

It was not in his generous, gentle nature to suffer any guest to remain uneasy under his roof ; whatever his purpose might be towards the stranger he could not have been otherwise than kindly courteous as became an host ; and Halbert was so ingenuous in his young, frank manhood, so fresh and confident in his untried hopes—so bold of venturing on the world which yet he did not know, that the heart of his kinsman warmed towards him. It *was* a true face, honest, manful, and guileless, with the boyish bloom upon it still, half bashful, half bold. The old man could ill be stern at any time, but now the artificial restraint gradually gave way ; he resigned himself to the natural guidance of his heart, and Halbert Graeme was installed that night a member of Mossgray's family—another child.

CHAPTER XIV.

Simple, grave, sincere.—COWPER.

WILLIAM OSWALD, the banker's son, inherited in some degree the disposition of his father; but the bitterness of the original stock was modified in the branch. A grave, decided, firm man, his character had already developed itself; but he was not obstinate. His mind was open at all points to truth, and strong and tenacious as was the grasp of his opinion, he was still convinceable, and did not wilfully shut his eyes against the light from what quarter soever it came. And William Oswald, though a thoroughly natural and warm-hearted man, and with indeed a singular degree of ardour under his gravity, was of the stuff which made stoics in the old Roman times. He had a power of self-denial and self-restraint, which is at all times a very considerable weapon, and could hold steadily on, past all the temptations of pleasure—past even the natural resting-place which wooed him to needed repose, on direct to his end. He did not speak about it; he made no demonstration of his ceaseless pursuit; but he fixed his dark glowing eyes clearly and steadily upon his aim, and went on, swerving neither to the right hand nor the left—able to give up pleasure, ease—able to endure toil and solitude, and with a definite, clear end before him, to pursue his way unfalteringly till it was gained.

He had been "bred a writer," as the sons of respectable, wealthy, middle-class men in Scotland frequently are, whether they be intended to practise the law as a profession or no; and there had been some talk of William succeeding Mr Shaw *the* writer in Fendie in his great business. But William, it appeared, did not choose to enter into partnership with young Mr Nichol Shaw, and in the mean time he was resting ingloriously in the obscure labours of his father's office.

And it greatly chafed the impatient spirit of Helen Buchanan that it should be so. Like most imaginative, youthful women, Helen fancied the freedom and licence of mankind one of the greatest possible gifts. There was no glorious

"might be" which did not seem to her ideal vision open to the ambition of *a man*. The exceeding might of virtuous influence—the empire of the generous, brave spirit over its fellows—once on this free eminence of manhood, and the ardent mind knew that these would be hers—they were possible to men—above all to the one man upon whom the fair garments of the ideal began to fall.

And Helen chafed unconsciously that William Oswald should be content with this inglorious life. The humble teacher of the little girls of Fendie aspired to a higher intellectual firmament; there were ambitious hopes and dreams and wishes stirring in the bare school-room, enough to have startled the little town out of its propriety; wishes, and dreams, and hopes of a more daring kind than ever young lady in Fendie had entertained before; and Helen Buchanan scarcely ranked as a young lady. She was noticed by none of the magnates, and courted in no society—she was simply the school-mistress; the people of Fendie, young and old, would have been overwhelmed with astonishment to hear of her ambition.

But William Oswald knew it, and his temper agreed as little as her own with the ease of inactivity. He was not the man to prefer the temporary pleasure of even her society, greatly as he prized it, to the necessary work of life; and he too had the upward tendency. He could not be content with the easy indolent satisfaction of competence, and already believing that the strong and vigorous youth within him was destined for something nobler than the businesses or amusements of the little country-town, his energy was stimulated by hers. They stood at this time almost upon terms of mutual defiance, yet each unconsciously supplemented the strength and had a share in all the secret purposes of the other. Their own individual combat was close and exciting, yet in the very act of resisting they invigorated each other for their several wrestles with the world without. They were neither of a very peaceable nature; it suited them to manage their wooing so.

But William's plans were laid. He had determined to return to Edinburgh to practise his profession. When he had won an independent position and name for himself—and to do that was of itself an end worth striving for—he felt that he should be much more likely to overcome the obstinate opposition of his father. The banker was proud

of his family, and William, a known man, occupying a standing ground honourably acquired by his own exertions, might expect to be differently treated from William the unknown who had no other position than that which belonged to Mr Oswald's son.

His mother assented with a sigh ; she foresaw a different end to the romance of her son's youth. He also, the cold voice of experience prophesied, would learn to approve those views of worldly wisdom, would forget the generous impulses of young life—would acquiesce in the prudent decisions of his father. Mrs Oswald too was prudent ; but her heart shrank from beholding the film of calculating foresight fall upon the frank vision of her only son. She could almost have chosen the imprudent marriage sooner than the chill wisdom which would make it impossible.

The banker consented readily to William's project ; it was likely, *he* thought, to accomplish a twofold good :—to establish the young man's fortunes steadily, on a basis of good work entered into with the freshness of youth, and to detach him from his foolish liking to the poor schoolmistress, who, gentlewoman as Hope asserted her to be, he was resolved to receive into his family—never !

So, although on grounds so different, the father and mother consented, and the grave, firm, undemonstrative son, the depths of whose nature were too profound to be frozen over as his mother feared by the icy prudence of the world, mapped out his own course, knowing better than they did the tenacious constancy of his own mind. It was no boyish fancy which moved him ; the light emotions of youthful liking were very different from this, and there was nothing from which the ardent, grave spirit stood in so little peril as change.

On a dull evening, late in December, he sat by Mrs Buchanan's fireside waiting till Mrs Buchanan's daughter should leave her school-room and her pupils. William Oswald had been a favourite long ago with his father's sensitive partner, and was a favourite with Mrs Buchanan of so long standing, that before the unfortunate hour in which he astonished with unworded eloquence the wondering ears of Helen, and raised the *questio vexata*, which at present did so strangely unite and disunite them, his prospects and purposes had been as confidentially discussed in Mrs Buchanan's parlour as at home ; and still, though Helen's mother began to feel strongly

interested in the prosperity of the Reverend Robert Insches, it was impossible to break through the old familiar use and wont which bound her to William Oswald almost like a mother to a son. In his absence she could fancy the Reverend Robert very eligible, but in his presence she felt almost unwillingly that it could be none but he, the daily long-accustomed visitor—the son trained into all their simple habitudes—the friend whom they knew so thoroughly, and who so thoroughly knew them.

To this friendly, confidential footing he was very anxious to return to-night. He wanted to discuss his plans with them, to make Helen aware of the course which he projected for himself. Since he made the plunge, and relinquished his place as friend to claim a nearer one, the attempt had cost him much; not only the constraint which it had placed upon his intercourse with his father, but the loss of Helen's society which it involved; so he resolved for this night to ignore their past struggle, and to be only the old familiar friend, the son of the house.

Mrs Buchanan and her visitor sat together silently, both of them somewhat sad. The sound of the children's footsteps and subdued voices broke the stillness, and almost immediately Helen entered the room. The candle was not lighted, for Mrs Buchanan liked the twilight, and was thrifty, besides economizing the daylight as she did other things. She was seated before the fire, which only shed a ruddy glow upon her face, and did not in any degree light the dusky room. Withdrawn in a corner of the sofa, William Oswald sat unseen.

"Mother," exclaimed Helen, as she entered, "I have been thinking all day of my old plan of going to Edinburgh. You remember what Hope Oswald said about Miss Swinton; and the letter I wrote to her has been lying in my desk for a month. I wish you would consent, mother; I wish you would let me send it."

"But, Helen, my dear," said the less hasty mother, "you must take no such step without consideration."

"What can we do here, mother?" said Helen, eager for the moment, in the strength of impulse. "What can we do here?—always the same—no possibility of changing this dull routine of labour—no chance of rising higher. I shall not always be young," and the sudden change from warm hope

to depression fell upon the variable face in an instant, "and so long as I am, should we not provide?"

"Helen, my dear," repeated the gentle Mrs Buchanan, "you distress me when you say such things; besides, it is nonsense, you know."

Helen did not answer; she sat down on the other side of the fire, and leaned her head upon her hand. The dim cloud of melancholy hovered over her—for the moment the young sunshine was gone. It *was* a dull routine—a laborious life—cheered only by the special inheritance of fair and gracious things which had been given her in her own spirit, and sometimes the cloud overshadowed even these.

"Helen," said the grave, firm voice whose power over her changeful moods she strenuously resisted, and even to herself would not acknowledge. "I am going to Edinburgh."

She started—the quick thrill of her varying nature went over her, carrying the cloud on its sudden breath. A flush of evanescent offence sprang over her face, as she looked past her mother to the dark figure which began to be dimly visible on the sofa. Her purpose had changed on the moment, but she was half angry that she had been anticipated.

"Yes," said Mrs Buchanan, rising hastily to light the solitary candle, "William is not content to live quietly at home, Helen. The air of Fendie is too still for him."

There was a slight drawing up of the stooping figure—an almost imperceptible expanding of the breast—a hurried, momentary glance at William, in which only one who had long studied it could discriminate the proud, shy pleasure, tinged as it was by a certain sadness, with which Helen heard this news.

"He is quite right," she said quickly.

"Do you think so?" asked William; "but what if I only lose myself yonder in the crowd, and remain as unknown as I am now?"

"I know you will not," said Helen. Then she recollected herself. "I mean—yes, William Oswald, I mean you will not—you will do better than that."

He was still in the shadow, and while he could observe every change of her features, she could scarcely see the dark glow of pleasure which covered his face.

"But, Helen, you think of fame—and I will never win fame; hundreds fail every year of acquiring the mere stand-

ing ground. Is it worth hazarding quietness and peace, and giving up home as I shall do, think you, for the chance of such distinction—only small distinction, Helen—as I can ever reach ?”

Her pulse began to beat more quickly—strong in those young warm veins of hers ran the tide of her ambition.

“I do not mean distinction—that is,” said the truthful Helen, who felt that in some degree she did mean it; “I mean things graver and nobler before distinction. I think the old chivalry will never die out of the world, William; to be a knight—to carry arms against all the powers of evil—to win new lands to acknowledge our king—whatever we have to work at for our bread, that remains the real work to live for, as it seems to me, and I know nothing so precious but one might peril it—nothing so dear but one would give it up for such a cause as that.”

Her voice shook a little with the excitement that made it strong—the stooping head was quite erect—the eyes shining like stars.

Mrs Buchanan sat a little apart looking at them—observing with quiet, smiling wonder how the grave face of the silent, uncommunicative William began to speak and grow eloquent too, as it bent towards the other countenance, whose thoughts were “legible i’ the eie.”

But he seemed more inclined to listen than to speak.

“I grant you that,” said William; “but suppose, Helen, a man should distrust his own powers, and think it most expedient to keep himself apart from all struggles—to withdraw far away from the evils he has not strength to contend with—what then ?”

“Then he does not fulfil his end,” said the rapid, eager voice—“which is not to flee from natural temptations and difficulties, but bravely to resist and do battle with the same. I know one feels one’s heart sink often. It may not be so with you who are strong—but *I* feel that to cease such work and warfare as one is called to do, does bring a perilous sinking of the heart. It is not well—surely it is not well to withdraw from the evils which are in us and about us; we are bound to do battle with them, William—not to stand on our defence alone, but to carry the war into the camp of the enemies. I think sometimes that the state of war must be the only good state for those who have sin natural to them as we have—and that if these words, resist and struggle,

were withdrawn from our language we should be no longer human ; for when we let our arms fall, our hearts fall, and weariness comes upon us, and distrust and gloom ; and out of the living, moving world we come into the narrow chamber of ourselves—and the sun sets upon us, William.”

The sun had set in the changeful face upon which William Oswald looked, and for the moment its waning colour and downcast eyes proclaimed the unmistakeable sinking of the heart. She did not perceive the look that dwelt upon her, nor its language—language unconsciously powerful. “And this, Helen, is your philosophy.” The words fell dreamily upon her ear, echoing through a long silence. The philosophy was not hers alone. Kindred thoughts had risen in the young minds, as they grew together into the early flush of maturity, and now she sent him forth—a knight.

CHAPTER XV.

Saucy fortune, did'st thou smile,
I perchance would little heed thee ;
Think'st thou when thou frown'st, the while
For myself I dread thee ?
Nay, not I—I only vow,
If one falls, it shall be thou.—ANON.

“I AM a man now,” said Halbert Graeme, with something of the pride of his years ; “and, thanks to your goodness, Sir, I have education enough for any ordinary profession. If only I could make a beginning—”

“You would certainly succeed,” said the Laird of Mossgray, with his pleasant, kindly smile.

“I do not know,” said Halbert, modestly ; “but I think that men who are content to work hard and persevere, must surely have some measure of success. I am not very ambitious—that is—”

“I shall not quarrel with you, Halbert, my man, for your ambition,” said the gentle kinsman, whom Halbert had feared as stern.

“Well, Sir,” said the youth, with renewed confidence,

"I should like to rise, no doubt; but I am willing to work hard for it, and quite content to begin as humbly as you think it proper I should. I have no right, I know, to such help, where I have already received so much; but I have the claim of blood on no one I have ever known, and I thought I might ask advice from you."

It was his second day at Mossgray, and Halbert remembered his last walk up the Aberdeenshire glen, a week ago, with Menie Monikie, and his declaration to her—

"I will tell him, I don't come to ask anything from him, Menie—I know he has been kind to me already—but he must know the world better than we do. Your father says he has been in India—and if I could but begin to maintain myself—*then*, Menie!"

And Halbert remembered what followed this *then*—the breaking of that slender golden coin, one half of which hung by Menie's blue ribbon, was warm against his own strong youthful breast, and the following farewell, with its tears and smiles, and visions of reünion; and Halbert's honest heart beat something loudly, and he grew bold and eager—if he only could begin.

"Halbert," said Mossgray, gently, "your father and I did not part friends. I thought he had not dealt truly by one whom I cherished as a sister, and it was in consequence of that, perhaps unwisely, that I denied myself the satisfaction of seeing another Graeme grow a man in this old house of Mossgray; but you say truly that it is time to decide on your future profession. Are you very impatient for this beginning?"

The kindly eye of Mossgray could not see through the warm double-breasted waistcoat, with which the care of Mrs Monikie had provided Halbert for his journey. The Laird had no knowledge of the mystic half of the broken coin, nor had ever heard the musical name of Menie. He thought therefore that this beginning was not so very momentous, and that it might be put off for a time without any particular disadvantage; and Halbert stammered as he answered. His kinsman thought it was but the natural shyness of youth.

"You must let us know you better," he continued, "and I shall qualify myself to advise; in the mean time, Halbert, remember that you are at *home*. You have all the beauties of your ancestral district to see, and I promise you they are

not few. While you learn to know them and us, we shall consult on this important matter. Are you content ?”

Halbert could not be otherwise than content ; the grace of the old man’s kindness charmed the young fresh spirit, and it was no penance to remain a member of that household of Mossgray, even though the fortune was not yet begun to make, and Menie Monikie disconsolately wandered in the Aberdeenshire glen alone. So Halbert took possession of his father’s former room, and wrote pleasant letters to the North—letters, on receipt of which the pragmatistical licentiate took pinches of mighty snuff in sign of satisfaction, and declared that “the lad, Halbert, was a lad born to a good estate, and would do credit to them all.”

But Mossgray began to behold festivities within its quiet walls ; and great was the interest and expectation among the invited guests, from Mrs Maxwell, of Firthside, painfully selecting from her Georgina’s abundant wardrobe, the dress which would best become her, to Mrs Buchanan, in her little palour, deliberating long and carefully over that one black silk gown of Helen’s. It was so very unusual, that all were curious about the long-suspended hospitalities of Mossgray.

In the little household itself there was some degree of excitement as they assembled in the drawing-room to await their guests. Lillas, with her mourning dress more studied than usual, looked almost as pale as when she first came to Mossgray, and sat in her ordinary seat, so serene and calm in appearance, even though her pulse did own a little acceleration, that the young joyous Halbert compared her in his fancy to one of those fair spirits of the air, nearer humanity than angels are, whose eyes are yet so much clearer than ours, as to unseen woes and perils, that men always paint them sad. Yet Lillas was not sad : the stillness of grief grown tranquil did indeed still temper all her feelings, but there were warm and pleasant hopes no less swelling in the even current of her mind. Only with these hopes the strangers about to be gathered round her had little sympathy and no concern, and involuntarily, with that quick instinct which makes us feel most solitary in a crowd, the thoughts of Lillas had travelled far away, and were dwelling with one who laboured alone in a strange country over the sea.

Very different were the feelings of the young betrothed of Menie Monikie ; but if Halbert was by no means intense,

he was very honest. He had written to Menie, proclaiming his anticipated enjoyment of this same festivity, and promising a faithful record of it, and having thus done all that was needful for the absent, he stood before the cheerful fire in great spirits, listening for the first sound of wheels, and exceedingly satisfied with his position.

The Laird of Mossgray sat at some little distance from the younger members of his family, and seemed to be busied with a book. He was not reading however; he was observing their different looks and feelings, and thinking of the strange conclusion which their presence in his house put to his solitary and recluse life. Both he had determined to keep at a distance from him; both had been shut out, by his grave and deliberate resolution, from his presence and his affection; and yet both were here. Secretly the old man smiled at himself, and at the trustful nature which now was too old to learn suspicion; secretly smiled at the vanity of those brittle barriers called resolutions, with which men stem, or try to stem, the tide of nature—resolutions made to be broken; and in his kindly philosophy he shook his head at his yielding self, and smiled.

The expected company began to arrive. A faint colour rose on the calm cheek of the youthful hostess as she received them, and the young representative of the Mossgray Graemes felt the ingenuous blood glow in his face as eye after eye fell upon him, and acquaintance after acquaintance was made. He felt that there was great consideration paid him, and that, however matters might eventually be decided, it was very clear that these dignified landed people looked upon him, Halbert Graeme, as the heir of Mossgray.

Helen Buchanan, feeling very shy and proud, and *de trop*, sat by herself in a corner. Near enough for her to hear every word of their conversation, were a group of ladies, old and young, whose glances fell upon her often, but who took no further notice of the humble guest. Girls were among them, gay and confident—mothers, kindly and solicitous, but all looked at her with cold, criticising eyes, and no one said a word of courtesy, or made the slightest attempt to admit her within their circle. They knew her very well; some had been specially introduced to her by her friend Lillas, who was at present occupied with other guests, yet they all suffered her to sit alone and in silence like a Pariah, while their cheerful, animated conversation went on so near. The proud heart

swelled bitterly as she listened; for Helen had unconsciously attached importance to this invitation, and accepted it with a flutter of the heart. The disappointment was very painful; it brought the melancholy of her temperament upon her: had it not been for the bulwark of her pride, Helen, out of those downcast, indignant, gleaming eyes, could have shed bitter tears.

Her own shy frankness, which could not rest till it had established terms of kindly intercourse with all who came near her, and the pain it gave herself to see any one uneasy, made her feel the slight the more. So well it would have become one of those comely mothers to spread the shield of their protection over the stranger—so seemly it would have been for the well-endowed and many-friended girls beside her to have helped her with the frank friendship of youth. Helen drew back into her corner, and felt the pain of being alone in all its bitterness. She did not know that the gracious courtesy of which she thought, was a thing, like genius, born and not made—a gift in which the ignoble have no part.

The Reverend Robert Insches was there. He hovered about the group at Helen's side, but he did not come near herself. She felt his desertion also a little. The Reverend Robert would have cheered her loneliness with all his heart, but he saw no other person who condescended to seek the society of the plebeian schoolmistress of Fendie; and the Reverend Robert was also by origin plebeian, and trembled for his acquired position. So he dared not draw all eyes upon himself, by volunteering the attention which no one else seemed inclined to give.

Lilias was fully occupied with other strangers at the opposite end of the room. Mrs Oswald, after she had saluted Helen with a kindness peculiarly delicate and cordial, thought it most expedient to remain at a distance from her; and William stood watching the changes of the sad, indignant, solitary face until he could bear the pain of the averted look no longer. There was a slight stir in the group of ladies, and among the attendant masculine hangers-on, as William Oswald came quietly to Helen's side. The Reverend Robert became envious and jealous—the ladies looked towards the corner with suppressed whispers and tittering—the banker watched them with the dark hue of anger on his brow; and with no kind face anywhere, except the one by her side,

whose look she would not meet, the bitterness swelled up almost to bursting within the heart of Helen.

Just then the Laird of Mossgray began to see how it fared with the one guest whose presence Lilius had desired, and in his graceful old-world courtesy he drew near to relieve her. As he passed on to Helen's corner, his attention was claimed at every step; but Mossgray passed through the happier groups, smilingly parrying the attacks made upon him.

"I have something to say to Miss Buchanan."

William Oswald silently made room for him, and the face of Helen lightened as she met the benign smile of the gracious old man. The group of ladies turned their eyes towards her, now with no titting—the Reverend Robert insinuated his tall figure into the vacant space behind her chair, and in the distance the banker vainly resisted, as she could perceive, the strong curiosity which turned his eyes towards her. She was a little interested, in spite of herself, in the looks and attitudes of William's father, and the new animation which lighted up her face had some pique in it. The mercurial temperament sprang up elastic and buoyant from the depths; and the bystanders who had so long ignored her presence, began to listen now, and to draw closer. One only moved to a greater distance than before, and the smile of proud pleasure on his face told well enough what feeling it was which prompted him to stand apart and only look on.

The banker was almost tempted to draw near himself, and ascertain whether the conversation, in which there were now various interlocutors, but the leaders of which were certainly the old man and the humble plebeian Helen, corresponded at all with the singularly variable face, to which his eyes were attracted against his will; but for very shame he could not make any advance. Mrs Oswald and Lilius were quietly conversing beside him. He could not quite hear what they said, but he could distinguish the frequent name of Helen; the obstinate man grew angrily inquisitive; they were all in a conspiracy against him.

He saw Mossgray change his position; he saw Helen rise, and with some evident shyness take the old man's offered arm. They came towards him; the stern banker was conscious of some excitement. He changed his position, cleared his throat, and twisted up in his hands a roll of engravings which lay on a small table beside him, to their entire destruction, and the secret delight of his watching wife.

"I have brought Miss Buchanan to see our picture," said the old man. "Mrs Oswald, has Liliás suffered you to see the portrait, for which I must borrow my young friend's pleasant name—have you seen the Lily of Mossgray?"

The banker's eyes were fascinated to the life-like nervous figure which stood so near him. The swift, instantaneous movements—the look which read the remainder of Mossgray's words before his sentence was half spoken—the moving of the lip, which seemed to repeat them as if in unconscious impatience of their tardiness. She was not like her father; he could see, even in this glance—and with something of "the stern joy which foemen feel," he perceived it—that the irritation which killed poor Walter Buchanan would have been but a spur to this elastic nature; and even Mr Oswald, strongly as he held by all the proprieties, could not but smile to think of the common-place people round him, "looking down" upon Helen.

"I have seen no Lily at Mossgray but one," said Mrs Oswald, "and was just venturing to reprove *her* for retaining her paleness so long. Helen, I wish we could borrow some of your elasticity for Miss Maxwell."

"That so Helen might withdraw from me the name she has given," said Liliás, smiling; "and Mossgray forget that I am like his favourite flower; no, no, that will not do; but the picture—I did not think any one would be interested in the picture: and Helen has seen it, Mossgray?"

"Helen only saw it in its earliest sketch," said the old man. "Come, I must exhibit it."

It was in a little room, which opened from the drawing-room, a very small place, looking like a recess of the larger apartment. Mossgray led his young companion in, followed by Mrs Oswald and Liliás. The banker made a few steps after them, but suddenly discovering that William watched him, he made a spasmodic halt at the door.

The little room was not brilliantly lighted, and the picture stood leaning against the wall. Liliás had begged that it should not be hung in its future place of honour, until after this evening. It was a very good and truthful portrait, with a pale pure light in its colouring in keeping with the subject. The scene was an antique turret-room in the oldest quarter of the house of Mossgray, which had been a chamber of dais when the old stock of the moss-trooping Graemes began to gather riches and to desire peace. There were carvings

of venerable oak about it, and furniture of a very old date; the Laird had especially chosen this room as the background for the portrait of Liliass.

And Liliass herself looked out from the brown tints of this still life, with her serene looks and every-day apparel. The painter and his subject had, both of them, too much taste to choose the vulgar, full dress, sitting-for-a-portrait attitude. A certain visionary poetic grace and fitness were in all the adjuncts. The contemplative, pensive look, the serene pale face, the pure, calm, melancholy brow, were rendered with a graceful hand; and the old man named the picture well when he called it the Lily of Mossgray.

"But Hope would not have arranged it so," said Helen, when she had sufficiently admired the portrait. "Hope would have made a group instead of that single spiritual face."

"And drawn me with breast-plate and rusty spear," said Liliass, "about to set out on a foray; because my name, Mossgray, reminds Hope of the Laird's Jock, and his brethren of the ballad-days."

"Nay," said Helen, "Hope has caught the graceful spirit of the ballads better than that; but she would have changed the scene to the old hall of the tower, and put breast-plate and steel-jack on a brotherhood of Graemes, and placed you, with your pensive look, in the midst, sending them forth, sadly and bravely, not on a foray, but on a truer errand, if it were to the Flodden that needed them. And I think almost that this same face, with that breath of sadness about it, might have suited the old hall well, and the armed men who were going forth, with a peradventure that they would never return; and the Lily of Mossgray would do honour to Hope's fancy, if the painter had thought of her as the Laird's Liliass."

As she ceased, she slightly turned her head. The banker was looking in eagerly—looking at her. As their eyes met, both withdrew hastily; Helen with a tingling thrill of shy pride, and Mr Oswald with a complication of feelings difficult to describe. Strong determination not to yield, strangely mingled with an absolute *liking* for the girl who praised his Hope so kindly, and to whom Hope clung with such affection. It was a very sudden feeling, but his eyes followed her unawares, almost with pride. William too was looking proudly after the rapid figure in the distance. Hope, at home, was thinking proudly, that no one in Fendie or in Edinburgh was

like Helen Buchanan ; and the banker, in his secret heart, acknowledged that they were right, while again he repeated his resolution—never !

CHAPTER XVI.

“He’s gentle—of all sorts beloved—and indeed much in the heart of the world.”—AS YOU LIKE IT.

HALBERT GRAEME was fully bent upon obeying the injunctions of his kinsman, and had already, thanks to his youthful strength, high spirits, and grey pony, made considerable acquaintance with his ancestral country. There were various good neighbours too who showed all willingness to aid him, and the race of young gentlemen who wrote themselves “younger of” all the castles and towers, shaws, braes, and holms of the district, opened their ranks with all imaginable pleasure to admit Halbert, “younger of Mossgray.” Halbert was happy in a frank temper, and no great share of ideality. His list of acquaintance grew like Jonah’s gourd. The fame of him went up the water and down the water ; from the county-town some fifteen miles away, to the furthest bounds of the Scottish border, the landed community of the fair Southern shire had heard of the new heir of the Graemes. Nor was it alone the landed community ; Halbert, like Hope Oswald, extended his friendship beyond his own exclusive class. Robbie Carlyle, the fisherman, grasped his bonnet when he met “the young laird” with a fervent salutation only accorded to his favourites, and John Brown, in the excitement of a busy market-day in the thronged Main Street of Fendie, proclaimed him : “Nane o’ your whilliewhaws—just a real, decent lad that kens a man o’ sense when he sees him !”

There were one or two dissentients. On a January day, Halbert, escorting Lillas on a walk longer than was usual to her, had the evil fortune to pass a potato field—a field which *had* borne potatoes—where Robert Paterson, the farmer of Whinnyside, was indolently superintending his two ploughs. It was a small farm, and its tenant was no great agriculturist. He “hadna just made up his mind what the crap was to be. Some said there wasna muckle dependence to be putten

on the taties, where they had ance turned out bad—though his had been no that ill the year—and some said the taties, noo, in thir times, paid better than the corn—and some said naithing paid ava; for his pairt he didna ken; he hadna made up his mind.”

Halbert was very active, and had a considerable share of the respectable qualities called sense and prudence. So he suggested to the good man of Whinnyside, that he was employing the most effectual means for securing that “naething should pay ava,” a reproof which did exceedingly offend and amaze the indignant Robert.

“He’s a bonnie ane, indeed!” said the angry farmer when Halbert had passed on, “to gie advice to a man that might be his faither—forbye being born on the land. I hae nae broo o’ thae keen Norlands. Ane would think they were learnt to put this and that thegither afore they were breekit—and the greed o’ them! considering and planning how to make the maist o’ everything; as if there was nocht to be done in this world but gather gear!”

But Robert Paterson was alone in his dissent—in all the district the feeling was strong in favour of the Norland Halbert.

Halbert and Liliass were going by Mossgray’s favourite walk, up the waterside. The two adopted children of Mossgray were very good friends; so good friends, Mrs Mense thought, that they would quite naturally settle down into the characters of laird and lady, and give Mossgray no further trouble; but altogether irrespective of the broken golden coin which hung from Halbert’s neck, and the solitary labourer in the East who toiled for Liliass, there were other preventives of which Mrs Mense was quite unaware. Liliass was a great deal older, graver, and more experienced than her young squire; though there was not much difference in positive age, but in that development and maturity of the mind which will not be confined to years. Halbert unconsciously looked up to the young Liliass as to his senior, and Liliass used terms of kindly familiarity to Halbert as to an ingenuous, pleasant younger brother. It was the best thing possible for their frank and friendly intercourse, but entirely destructive to the hopes of Mrs Mense.

The road along the waterside was a pleasant one, though the trees were bare, and though it ascended and descended steep braes now and then, and there were places here and

there, where the path was very nearly a rustic stair, with interwoven roots for steps. The neighbourhood of Fendie is the very stronghold of burns—you meet them running cheerily through the country like hardy cottage children at every turn, and multitudes of those fairy tributaries swell the noble dark-brown water as it sweeps downward to the Firth. Yonder does one pour down foaming, over the rugged bank of broken rock and gathered stones, high over which that daring strippling birch waves its thin branches, half timorous, half exultant; and here another, softly stealing under cover of the long melancholy willows glides noiselessly, a gentle child, into the bosom of the river. Another—and see how this kind alder kneels upon the mimic headland, shadowing the little bay where its coy wavelets linger—and yet another—with its wild headlong rush, defying those great stones, and jostling the roots of the shrinking beech which somehow has fallen here, and grows patiently and resigned, to its full height, a little timid of its impetuous neighbour. But the name of these children of the hills is legion; listen—you would fancy a school had newly “skailed,” so full is the air of their ceaseless singing; and if you dwell among them but a little time you will learn to know their individual voices, and to name them by separate names as you name human children.

The water itself is broad and full, “from bank to brae,” and flows down with a strong life in it, pleasant and hopeful to see; that ample, wide stream, instinct with the easy unostentatious force of nature—you can fancy, as it hastens on, that the bold current throbs, like the beating of a strong man’s breast.

Winding yonder through the trees—here, sweeping round that soft swelling grassy bank, and again a little further on over-arched by those long bare, far-spreading boughs. Beyond itself there is little prospect, for the trees on every side shut in the view, delicately revealing their naked tracing against the sky, with heavy firs and pines keeping some show of verdure in the skeleton wood.

But Halbert and Lillas were not thinking of views, except of those eager, hopeful human ones, which rose so vividly before the youth’s eyes; for Halbert was explaining his own wishes and intentions, and craving the good counsel of the Lily of Mossgray.

“I should have very much preferred my father’s profession,” said the young man, “and Mr Monikie told me Mossgray was

willing that I should study for the bar if I chose ; but Moss-gray has supported me all my life, Lili-as. I could not think of remaining a burden on him."

"And was that your sole reason?" asked his grave and sagacious counsellor.

The honest Halbert blushed, and smiled, and hesitated.

"Well, perhaps it would not be quite true if I said it was the sole reason ; but it certainly was an important one."

"And the others?" inquired Lili-as with a smile.

"The others? they were various ; for instance, I am not by any means sure that I have the necessary gifts—so few men can speak well in public ; and—it must always be a slow success, I fancy, the success of an advocate ; when one has a rank to maintain, and very little to maintain it—"

Halbert looked very prudent and careful as he paused.

"And you want to succeed quickly, Halbert," said Lili-as, "and so will choose some gainful business rather than the learned profession—is that it?"

"To tell the truth," said Halbert, hastily, "I am anxious to be settled as soon as possible ; to establish myself ; to have a home ; you understand me, Lili-as?"

Lili-as looked at the youth's glowing face and smiled.

"Did you never think you were too young, Halbert, to be the head of a house?"

"Too young!" Halbert was half inclined to be angry. "Come, Lili-as, that is not fair ; and then you know, I have no friends, no relations ; I am alone."

Lili-as became suddenly grave ; but as she looked again at the young, frank face beside her, in its flush of early manhood, another smile, kindly and gentle, stole over her lip. To be alone—to have no friends—the joyous Halbert with his light spirit, and honest straightforward character, and lack of the ideal and sensitive, did by no means understand what these words meant. He could find a Menie Monikie everywhere, he could never be alone.

"You were not alone in Aberdeenshire," said Lili-as ; "and I fancy you will be bringing this pretty Menie to Moss-gray by and by, Halbert. Is that what being settled means?"

Halbert stammered a happy half denial, which was a confession, and proceeded in very high spirits to ask Lili-as what she thought he should do.

"I think you should wait," said his adviser, "till Moss-

gray gives you the counsel you asked from him. You may remind him of it, Halbert, but I think you should not press our good friend ; we may have all confidence in the kindness of Mossgray."

Halbert fully assented. The old man had charmed all doubts from the mind of the young one, and with a light heart and perfect content, he left his anxieties in his kinsman's hand.

Lilias had never ventured so far before, and now their course was suddenly stayed by a deep cavernous burn, rumbling far down, under a long avenue of very large saugh or willow trees. The foliage of these was so exuberant in summer that the hoarse water below scarcely ever saw the sun ; and over it was an old dilapidated bridge—rude planks of wood, fenced on each side by stiles, and so decayed as to seem unsafe. Halbert parted the thick willow branches with his hand to look through ; and beyond they saw, half buried in a wilderness of trees, the roof and gables of a house. Lilias had heard of this place so often that she knew at once what it was.

"I am afraid this is scarcely safe for you," said Halbert. "Shall we have to return, Lilias ? though I confess I should like to explore this place. Does anybody live in that wilderness, I wonder."

"I fancy it must be Murrayshaugh," said Lilias. She spoke low ; there was something which excited her reverence in the melancholy decay and loneliness of the old house, and the unknown fate of its owners. "Let us go nearer, Halbert ; the bridge must be safe enough."

It was not very safe, yet it bore the light weight of Lilias, and quivered beneath the springing bound of Halbert ; they were within the enclosure of Murrayshaugh.

The house was less irregular and less extensive than Mossgray. Its former proprietors, in their prosperous time, had not chosen to establish themselves on the bleak far-seeing mount, where the remains of the ancient peel were now mouldering stone by stone : and this house, decayed as it was, had some architectural pretensions. Its taper spear-like turrets shot up through the bewildering maze of wood in which it was enclosed, and the mossy terrace stretching along its front gave some distinctness to its form below. A very narrow grass-grown path wound past a rounded gable to some back entrance ; and the former flower-beds bordering the way

bore now a scanty crop of vegetables—except this all was perfectly neglected; but the few cabbages and leeks, and a thin ascending breath of smoke, and a gentle aroma of peats, told that somewhere about the solitary house there was humanity, and its attendant spirit, the fire.

“Did you ever hear of this place, Halbert?” said Lillas, as they stood beside the great window in the gable, looking into a large, faded, melancholy room, which bore evident marks of care and order, solitary and desolate though it was.

Halbert looked a little astonished.

“I have never before been at Mossgray,” he answered, “and at home—I mean in the North—these border counties were very Antipodes to us.”

Lillas did not answer; she looked thoughtfully along the green, melancholy terrace, thinking of Lucy Murray in her solitude, and of Charlie Graeme the household traitor, whose honest, fresh, ingenuous son had never heard of Murrayshaugh.

The faint sound of a lifted latch aroused her attention and she looked round. A little old woman, with impatient, vivacious features and quick pattering steps, came along the grass-grown path. She had heard voices without, and had issued forth in evident wrath to avenge the intrusion on her territory.

“Oh, mem, I beg your pardon!” she exclaimed, as she made a dead stop in front of Lillas. “If I didna think it was Robbie Carlyle’s cuddie and that tinkler of a callant, Peter, chasing him! but ye’ll be the young lady of Mossgray?”

Lillas took the designation with a smile.

“This is Murrayshaugh, is it not?” she asked.

But the little woman’s eyes were so busy that she lost the question. She was examining with singular curiosity the face of Halbert Graeme.

“This is Murrayshaugh?” repeated Lillas.

“Ay, it’s Murrayshaugh,” was the answer emphatically given, while the speaker looked wrathfully at Halbert Graeme.

Halbert was considerably astonished; but the unconscious natural prepossessing smile remained upon his truthful face. It was a very honest straightforward countenance;

what we call "aefauld," in Scotland—and the old woman gradually melted under the frank, good-humoured smile.

"They ca' me Eesabell Broun," she said abruptly, "and I keep the house. I've lived here a' my days, and if ye would like to see it, I've nae objections."

"If we will not trouble you too much," said Lillas, smiling at the limited permission, "I shall be glad to see Murrayshaugh."

Eesabell turned away at once, and went pattering round to a not very elegant back door. Her visitors followed her.

"Na—na," said the old woman, fretfully waving them back with her quick, withered hand; "we may be puir, and puir enough, but there shall nae gentle come this gate into Murrayshaugh; gae round to the ither side; ye'll get in by the richt door."

It was a respectable irritation, and the two young explorers turned with some amusement to obey. The great door of Murrayshaugh was somewhat heavy on its rusted hinges; the opening of it taxed all the impatient strength of Isabell Brown.

There was not much to see within; everything saleable had been removed from those cold, dreary, uninhabited walls before the armed man, Want, drove its last tenant from his father's house. So much furniture as remained was old and faded; the haughty, proud old man had studiously displayed its poverty; he professed to disdain the mean art of making shifts to hide it—it was the bitter art of unbending pride which left its forlorn nakedness so visible to every eye.

But the little, quick, irascible custodier of the lonely house had been so long used to the poverty of its scanty furniture that she was now unconscious of it; and when she carefully dusted the high-backed chairs of "Miss Lucy's parlour," and closed the shutters lest the sun should spoil the colours of the decayed worn carpet, whose colours had been jumbled in incoherent old age when she herself was but a child, Eesabell Brown was perfectly sincere. She had a veneration for those solitary and quiet inhabitants of the house in which she had lived all her days; they were older dwellers than she; and when she thought of the "Miss Lucy" who had been the pattern and glory of her younger days returning to Murrayshaugh—and she did think of it constantly—it was still as Miss Lucy—the fair, *young* lady whom in

her own girlhood she thought chief of women. This was the romance of the little old housekeeper of Murrayshaugh. She had known few fluctuations of fortune since the great era of their departure; somehow or other Isabell herself had grown old; but unchangeable as the high-backed chairs and the faded carpets seemed Murrayshaugh and Miss Lucy—and they would return.

"My mother was housekeeper when the Laird and Miss Lucy gaed to foreign pairts," she said to Lillas. "Ye'll have heard o' Miss Lucy?—ay, but I question if ye ever saw the like o' her. Wasna auld Greenshaw your grandfather? I thocht that. Weel, Miss Lucy gaed herself, ance errant, to see your mother, to please Mossgray."

Isabell said this with great importance; but Lillas was not overawed, though her face was very grave.

"There's no a young lady atween this and her, wherever she be," continued the old woman with vehemence, "that it wadna be an honour to even to Miss Lucy, though them that should have kent, didna ken."

A quick indignant glance at the young man accompanied this speech; but the glance of Isabell's wrath was harmless lightning to the unconscious Halbert.

"Me and my sister Jean were brought up here," said Isabell, more calmly, "and she was married upon a cousin o' our ain:—maybe ye ken John Broun that's at the Mount—that's Jean's son."

"He is my earliest acquaintance in Fendie," said Halbert, good-humouredly, "and an honest fellow he is; but why do they leave you alone here?"

"My lane!" said Isabell; "am I no housekeeper? and us disna ken the day that Murrayshaugh may come hame!"

Lillas checked Halbert with her lifted hand; the old woman's delusion was sacred.

They had entered "Miss Lucy's parlour," and were looking at some pictures on the wall. Before the first of these, that of a young man in an antique dress, evidently an old family portrait, Lillas paused with a sudden start. There was a vivid colour and surprised animation on her face, such as Halbert had never seen her have before, and the tone of her voice struck him as she turned to ask about the picture—low, full, and musical, as if the heart throbbed through it more warmly than was its wont.

"It's ane o' the auld Murrays—I dinna mind his name,"

said Isabell; "but Miss Lucy had a conceit that it was like Mr Hew. They were a' like ither; the same face came down, like the name, frae faither to son. That ane was a Hew too, I dinna doubt; it's a guid name; they maun a' have been fond o't."

"Hew," repeated Lillas, slowly, as if she too loved to linger on the sound; "Hew—yes, it is a pleasant name."

And she turned again with lingering looks and smiles of strange pleasure to the picture as she left the room. Halbert smiled too in wonder. He hardly could fancy an appropriate cause for such emotion in the wise, grave Lillas; and there was no such magic in any picture there for him.

CHAPTER XVII.

"He thinks well of himself, Sir—we all do it; and he thinks well of his fortune—happy he who can! and if myself am well, and my fortune is well, who shall resist me?"—OLD PLAY.

THE Manse of Fendie was a good-sized, substantial house, situated at the rural end of the Main Street, with very tolerable grounds about it, and a well-stocked, extensive garden behind. Within, there were three good sitting-rooms—dining-room, drawing-room, and library, as the Reverend Robert Insches was pleased to call them. His predecessor had been a man of good family and small pretensions. In his time the library was only a study, and the drawing-room a family parlour; but the Reverend Robert had changed all that.

The furniture was all new, as it was natural that the furniture of a young man's house should be, but it had a brassy look not very agreeable to the eye. The chairs stood so stiffly in their grim gentility, the carpets were so spotless, the tables so bright, that you felt afraid to disturb their solemn repose by presuming to make them serve the purposes of ordinary life; but if a stranger feared them, tenfold was the dread with which their dignified stillness impressed Miss Insches, the little, fat, roundabout sister of the Reverend Robert. With awe and reverence, she herself with her own plump

hands dusted the sacred drawing-room; with fear for her own presumption, gingerly sat on the extreme edge of one of those wonderful rosewood chairs, when the drawing-room on solemn occasions was used. The Reverend Robert angrily lectured her for this foible; it was in vain. Miss Insches could not be otherwise than reverential of "the grand furniture."

The library was the smaller room of the three. You could not have guessed it was a library, had not the minister's sister been at pains to inform you. There was a small bookcase in it, veiled with curtains within the glass doors, and a study table; in the reign of the last minister it had been overflowing in all its corners with books—at present it was much too trimly arranged for that. The room had to do double duty; it was parlour as well as study. There Miss Insches sat, holding in her breath on the Fridays and Saturdays lest she should disturb Robert at his preparations; and there in the earlier days of the week, when Robert had no sermons to write, the elderly, worshipping sister, and the young idol brother, were very comfortable together. The young man was a genius in his way, and preached as no one had preached in Fendie for long years before. Save for the one weakness of making a hobby of his "position," indeed he had good sense and good feeling as well as talent, and promised to be noticeable in his generation. Only the sudden change from the hard student life and cares of poverty, to the good stipend and much-prized "station" of Fendie, had a little dazzled the eyes of the Reverend Robert, and, like other young men, he rode his hobby hard and furiously.

At the fireside in the "library" his sister and he sat together; there was some consternation in the plump, good-humoured face of Miss Insches. She was evidently bewildered—"a party!"

"You know, Janet, I don't by any means intend a formal, large party," said the Reverend Robert, who had been for the last ten minutes vainly endeavouring to convey a less magnificent idea of his intention to his sister's perplexed mind. "A few friends merely—a few of your own friends—it is necessary, you know, that we should not show ourselves unsocial."

"My own friends?" Miss Insches was rather obtuse. "There's the provost's wife, and there's Miss Rechie Sinclair, and Mrs Irving of Friarsford—is't them you're meaning, Robert?"

Robert was impatient.

"I am sure, Janet, you can have no pleasure in the company of a vulgar person like Mrs Irving—and the provost's wife—I don't like her, you know ;—and Miss Rechie—well, she's a good little woman—but she would be quite out of place in my drawing-room, surely."

Miss Insches looked awed and reverential. It was very true that these plebeian personages would not at all suit the Reverend Robert's dignified drawing-room, of which she herself was only a tenant at will, liable to be ejected whenever it should please its lord and master to bring home a wife.

"And our Robert's a fine-looking lad, as well as a clever," said Miss Insches under her breath ; "he might marry onybody he likit."

"Maybe it would be best to tell me, Robert," she said aloud, humbly, "what folk you were thinking to ask—and then I would ken."

"Well, Janet," said the minister graciously, "there's Mr Halbert Graeme and Miss Maxwell of Mossgray."

Miss Insches lifted up her hands in the extremity of her astonishment.

"The young lady of Mossgray !"

"Why not ?" exclaimed the Reverend Robert, indignantly impatient. "I am astonished, Janet ;—you forget my position—you forget—"

"No me, Robert—no me," ejaculated his penitent sister.

"And I suppose we must have some of the brethren," continued Robert, after a pause. "There's Mr Wright of the *quoad sacra* at Fairholm ; but then we could not ask him without his wife, and she—you know he made a very foolish marriage."

"Ay," responded Miss Insches promptly ; "he married Willie Tasker the joiner's daughter, at Todholes, a bonnie-like wife for a minister. Weel, Robert, maybe I am not proud enough, but I would have you marry naebody but a lady."

The Reverend Robert blushed a little.

"Do you know, Janet, little Hope Oswald has a theory that ladies are not made but born—not what you call well-born however ; suppose we call on Mrs Wright and see what sort of a person she is. Wright has been very foolish, no doubt, but if we can consistently notice him, we should—" Mr Insches drew himself up, and thought of Mossgray's graceful courtesy to the solitary Helen.

Miss Insches was decidedly repugnant—she had no toleration for the *mésalliances* of ministers.

“And there is Paulus Whyte,” continued the Reverend Robert. “He is to preach for me on the fast day, so we can have it the night before; and, by the by, Janet, there is a young lady in Fendie, a great friend of Miss Maxwell’s. What is her name again? Buchanan, yes, Buchanan—you must ask her.”

“You’re no meaning the schoolmistress?” said Miss Insches.

The Reverend Robert faltered a little—only a little—he was reassured by remembering the kindly attentions of Mossgray.

“Yes, I believe she does keep a school; but she is very intimate with Miss Maxwell—you must ask her.”

“Weel,” said Miss Insches, with some astonishment, “I am sure I dinna object; but to you to ask the schoolmistress among thae big folk, Robert! and maybe she’ll no like to come—she’s but young, puir thing—when the maister of the house is a young man.”

“Oh,” said the minister, with a hasty blush, “she will never think of me. You must ask her to meet Miss Maxwell.”

Miss Insches looked somewhat suspicious; she did not understand this; besides, she had heard her brother speak of Helen before, and now he hesitated at her name as if he did not recollect it. “I dinna ken what Robert means,” she muttered to herself as he left the room. “I am sure he kens the lassie well enough; what for could he no mind her name? Weel, to be sure, he’s the minister—but if he were ony ither man, I would hae my ain thoughts about it.”

And her ain thoughts Miss Insches had, minister though her brother was; but the will of Robert was not to be contested, so his suspicious sister prepared herself for obedience.

A still further test of obedience he required from her that very afternoon: but then, too, Robert conquered, and they set out together to call on the new Mrs Wright of the Fairholm chapel of ease.

The Reverend Simon Wright was, like the Reverend Robert Insches, of plebeian origin, but, unlike his younger, more gracerul, and more talented neighbour, he was by no means adapted for the profession of gentleman. He too had

a sort of sluggish, heavy ambition, though it had not reached the altitude of Robert's; but his marriage had sentenced him hopelessly to his original standing. It was barely possible that he might have struggled upward alone, but there was no elevating the dead weight of his wife. For himself he had a ponderous unserviceable mind, not without a certain power, and after his own fashion could preach good sermons sometimes; but generally the man was an incapable man, slow to perceive, and helpless to take advantage of his opportunities. Willie Tasker, the joiner, had given him lodgings for a month or two, while his staring, red, box-like manse was being built, and the result was that Willie Tasker's daughter became the minister's wife.

To the immense indignation of his neighbours and people all and sundry, who felt in the degradation of their minister a personal injury, and who having expressed their disapprobation of the courtship by various very decided demonstrations, were now keeping aloof, and refusing to notice the new wife. Still more indignant were the wives of "the brethren" in the vicinity, at this intruder into their ranks. They, all of them, discovered suddenly that without a conveyance it was impossible to pay visits; and "we do not keep a conveyance." The inference was unmistakeable; it was not in their power to call on Mrs Wright.

Miss Insches fully shared in the general indignation, but she was not without curiosity; so with proper condescension, and as a duty, she agreed to accompany her brother.

The best room of the Fairholm Manse had two windows; it stood rather high, and was approached by a road which one of these windows commanded, so as very conveniently to warn the inhabitants of the rare advent of visitors. As they opened the gate, a sturdy maid servant stared at them for a moment—answered Mr Insches in the affirmative, when he inquired if her mistress was at home, and precipitately fled to the back door, leaving the visitors to find the more dignified entrance at their leisure. They had to pass the windows of the "best room;" within, sitting as gingerly as ever Miss Insches sat, in a parlour by no means so fine as the sacred drawing-room, they had a first glimpse of the bride. She saw them looking for the door in some confusion, but she sat bolt upright in her new dignity, with her hands crossed in her lap, and her eyes fixed upon the opposite wall, and made no sign.

"The woman's daft," muttered Miss Insches, "could she no let folk in? Mrs Whyte, that's a lady born, is no ower grand to open the door."

The Reverend Robert laughed, not without some secret shame; it was a good lesson, and did him service. He began to see the vulgarity of this assumption; his own natural taste had kept himself within bounds, anxious as he was to maintain the decorums which he fancied necessary to his "position;" but this was sufficiently ludicrous to make him ashamed of the stiff gentility to which he had been endeavouring to train his good-humoured sister. His heavy brother of Fairholm was labouring to *make* his wife a lady—a very impossible process, as her appearance showed.

She had a soft large face, a drooping head, a tall, gawky person—and when the handsome Mr Insches and his cheerful sister seated themselves beside her, she giggled. Miss Insches talked, and so did the Reverend Robert: the bride answered by a hysteric titter. It was her sole accomplishment. She had by no means a gift for conversation, but she could giggle to perfection.

Mr Wright came to the rescue, in his own person, and by means of ecclesiastical subjects a long half hour was spent; but Robert made no mention of the intended party. He was by no means proud of having made acquaintance with the bride.

"Robert," said Miss Insches solemnly, as they left the house, "whatever ye do, dinna gang and break our hearts with a gawky like yon. I'm no caring for siller; but man, Robert, if ye canna get a lady, dinna take up with a fule!"

The Reverend Robert smiled—pleasantly before his eyes glided the graceful nervous figure, with its swift motions, and springing step, and eloquent face. Secretly in his own mind he did at that moment elect the poor schoolmistress to the honourable vacant seat at the head of his dignified table. It was true she was poor, and had for years laboured to earn her own bread; but Helen Buchanan was a gentlewoman born!

In the meantime Helen Buchanan remained perfectly unconscious of her election. Mr Insches, his good qualities, and his indifferent ones, had passed from her mind altogether. She was not even angry at his desertion of her, during the earlier part of that Mossgray party, and met him the next time she saw him after it with a quite unclouded face. If

William Oswald had been the offender, the offence would have ruffled in a very different way the memory of Helen. It was a bad omen for the Reverend Robert.

And William Oswald was gone. He had established himself now, a permanent inhabitant of Edinburgh, practising his profession as it pleased the public to give him opportunity; and the public was not unpropitious. His father had many connections in other little towns like Fendie, and Fendie itself was respectably litigious. William Oswald was pronounced "a rising young man," "a sagacious lad," by voices of authority in the sacred precincts of the Parliament House. His prospects were fair and prosperous—the banker began to be proud of his thriving son.

And William began to be heard of in other spheres than the Parliament House. In the Scottish capital as in the English, stout hearts were banding themselves for a holy war, a new Crusade. Against the physical evils which debase the poor, against giant sins which have their absolute dominions mapped out in every city; for wise men began to see how poverty and wretchedness, iniquity and pollution, press forward upon the mere barrier of defence set up to oppose their progress, and steadily make a way. So one here and there, stung to the heart with one particular evil, and yearning over the masses of unregarded poor, had snatched a flaming brand out of the slow consuming fire, and holding it up above his head, in earnestness almost wild, had begged and prayed his fellows to look upon the ghastly sight below. Little perishing outcast children, trained, as one could fancy, by malignant spirits only, to breathe in crime like daily air. Strong men sinking—sinking—into woe and misery ineffable, binding themselves with those green withes of customary sin, which by and by should harden into chains of iron. Women, woe of woes, lost without hope. And good men had united themselves in an aggressive war, to go forth against all the powers of darkness—not simply to defend, but to invade and rout and conquer, holding no terms or parley with the might of sin.

The fluttering flush came and went over Helen's cheek, as she read eagerly the doings of this new chivalry of Scotland. Her breast swelled—her heart beat. William was among them, bearing arms like a true man.

The Reverend Robert had no chance against this: the young man had strayed further from the East than he need

have done, and though performing his ministerial work well and conscientiously, did by no means project his very heart into it, or live for it as his chief end. He also was a good man and a Christian; but from his life you would have fancied that the ardent rejoicing might of labour, which insures success in any other profession, was misplaced in his—that the work of all others in which every moment is solemn and weighty, was the one work which should be done in deliberate calmness—for he was not aggressive. He lamented over existing evils, but he did not bravely and at once attack them. He was content to be a matter-of-course minister—as good as his neighbours, moving along in a sort of mechanical respectable way. He was not yet roused to feel himself standing alone, with God his master over him, and the whole world lying in wickedness—to be saved.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“I am bid forth to supper.”—MERCHANT OF VENICE.

It was the evening of Miss Insches' party, and two of her guests were already comfortably established in the sacred drawing-room. Next day was the fast day in Fendie, and the Reverend Paulus Whyte was to preach. Mr Insches was rather a favourite with Mrs Whyte. She had been persuaded to accompany her husband, and was to remain all night at the Manse.

Mr Whyte was seated in an easy chair, talking in a low, gentle, pleasant voice to the very attentive Miss Insches. He was a little man, with courteous, graceful manners, and a very mild, engaging face. No tongue, however slanderous, could find matter of accusation against Paulus Whyte; friend and foe alike did unconscious homage to the pure, unselfish spirit which dwelt among them in its peaceful mildness—a visible citizen of heaven. He was one of those few men whose especial gift seems holiness; you heard all classes, the religious and the profane, do reverence to the distinguishing quality of the gentle minister. He was a holy man.

He had one weakness—a failing incident to his guileless,

benevolent nature. He was a little too apt to write biographies of very good little boys, who died at eight or nine in the odour of sanctity, and little girls who, at a like age, were experienced in all the difficulties and temptations of the spiritual life. On the counters of religious booksellers you were continually picking up little books in coloured covers, memorials of the last small pious Jane or William who had died within the good minister's ken. In the simplicity of his own gentle nature, he received all the traits of childish goodness, which weeping mothers and aunts told him when their first grief began to soften; and rejoicing in "the holiness of youth," recorded the little incidents of those young lives for the edification of all. They were not always to edification; but the good man fervently believed them so, and in his own devout heart gave thanks joyfully for the youthful angels of whom he had registered so many. There were some who smiled at the weakness, and some who sneered at its fruits; but few men sneered at Paulus Whyte. His garments were too spotless—his serene life too pure for any reproaches of the adversary.

His wife was a vivacious, lively, cheerful person, pleasantly patronizing to all youthful people. She liked young society, and she liked to take such as suited her under her wing, and bring them forward, and encourage them by all kindly means. She was chatting in her own cheerful, sprightly way, with Robert Insches, who held a high place in her favour. She was bent at present on providing him with that indispensable equipment for all young ministers—a wife—and had plans of her own on the subject, of which Robert had a considerable guess; but Robert conquered himself, had full confidence in the fascination of Helen, and felt sure of the ultimate approval of Mrs Whyte.

The first arrival was a sister of Mrs Whyte's, a widow lady resident at Fendie. She was a querulous person, constitutionally inclined to look at the dark side of everything, a perfect contrast to the happier temper of her sister, but withal not destitute of a kindred kindness. Only the youthful people patronized by Mrs Gray, were sedulously tutored into a melancholy certainty of the inevitable miseries of the world. She tried, good gloomy woman, to charge the natural atmosphere of hope with the vapoury fears in which she herself found a certain sombre satisfaction, and now and then she was temporarily successful.

The drawing-room was not very much crowded. Besides these, there were only Lillas, Halbert, Helen, and the banker Oswald and his wife.

The last two were invited by Mr Insches for some unexplained reason. They were certainly his very good friends, but that was not the cause; he had many good friends in Fendie quite as eligible; but the Reverend Robert had once or twice encountered William in the immediate vicinity of Mrs Buchanan's house, and had an idea that his rival, like himself, was kept back by scruples of pride, or by consideration of what "the world" would say. Consequently, William's parents were invited to-night to show them that the step was taken, that the dignified youthful minister had made up his mind, and that Helen was about to be elevated to the lofty position of Mistress of the Manse.

Helen herself, who had come with some reluctance, felt already uncomfortably hampered by her host's attentions; there was a slight ostentation in them—a certain consciousness of derogation on his own part, and fear for her, lest the exaltation should dazzle her. Helen kept closely by the side of Lillas, amused, afraid, and suspecting some design upon her.

Mrs Oswald seated herself beside the young friends. The banker kept apart, struggling very vainly against the curiosity which turned his eyes towards this group; he began to feel an interest in watching the colour fluctuate and change on Helen's cheek, and to understand the half-suppressed, impatient motion and altered attitude, which testified some annoyance under those elaborate courtesies of Robert Insches. Mr Oswald was sadly inconsistent; he had a certain satisfaction in perceiving that these courtesies did not seem particularly acceptable to Helen.

"My dear," said the plaintive Mrs Gray, addressing Lillas, "I am glad to see you looking so much stronger: but perhaps you are flushed—just a little flushed to-night; you must be very careful as you go home that you don't take cold."

"I heard Mrs Mense making a great provision of cloaks for my home-going," said Lillas, smiling; "they are too careful of me, Mrs Gray. I shall not take cold if my good friends can guard me from it."

"Well," said Mrs Gray, "this is a strange world; you will see trouble coming often to those who are most carefully guarded, while others who can use no precautions escape

it altogether. Ay, Miss Insches, you may well shake your head ; I have seen such things myself."

Miss Insches had indeed shaken her head sympathetically, because the good-humoured little woman thought some assent was necessary ; but on being thus involved as an interlocutor, she looked very guilty and confused, and was by no means sure whether she should have done it or no.

"But why speak of it so drearily, Agnes ?" said Mr Whyte, who, mild man as he was, gave his sister-in-law's doleful moods no quarter. "I can see cause for nothing but thankfulness in that. That Providence specially cares for those who cannot care for themselves ; it is positive sunshine to think of it."

"Ay," said Mrs Gray, mournfully, "the minister and I always take different views ; but you'll allow, Paulus, what the Bible says its very self of this weary world. A vale of tears—a shadow that fleeth away—the valley of the shadow of death."

"My dear Agnes," said the vivacious Mrs Whyte, with some impatience, "I wish you would quote the chapter and verse, for I really have no recollection of the vale of tears in Scripture."

"Elizabeth," answered Mrs Gray, with solemnity, "the dark day has not fallen upon you yet, and I hope it may be long deferred ; but it is a heavy life. The very best of it is just a succession of work and fatigue, waking and sleeping, weariness and rest. I see you agree with me, Mr Oswald. We are in a miserable world, and the sooner we are done with it the better for ourselves."

The banker, thus appealed to, looked as much amazed as Miss Insches ; he did by no means agree with Mrs Gray, but he was somewhat slow of speech, and could not manage to express his sentiments. There was a certain orthodoxy too in this view of the matter ; so the honest man hesitated and looked confused, and not knowing what to say, finally said nothing.

"And Miss Buchanan, my dear," said Mrs Gray, with an affectionate sadness, "I see I have you on my side."

"Oh no, no, no," said Helen eagerly, in the tremulous low voice which she always spoke in, when she was greatly moved ; a voice, more than half reverie, broken now and then abruptly by a consciousness of being listened to.

"No ?"

"There is nothing miserable in it," said Helen, forgetting herself, and speaking rapidly, and so low that the banker needed to bend forward before he could hear; "nothing but what we *make*; I think the words should be noble and grand rather, in all its light and all its gloom. It is very dark sometimes. I know there are eclipses and thunder-clouds; but not miserable—no, no. It does not become us—surely it does not become us to make its changes matters of sadness; for the labour's sake it is good to rest, and the labour itself—I think sometimes that if we had no other blessing, *that* would be great enough to rejoice in all our days—to have work to do under the sunshine of heaven—work for the Master—the King! I do not know; I think there is no grief that can match the joy of this."

The nervous small fingers were clasped together, the unquiet face looking into the vacant air with shining, abstracted eyes, the head erected in eager enthusiasm; and bending forward as if to a magnet, the banker Oswald looked on.

Lilias Maxwell laid her hand gently on Helen's clasped fingers. There was an instantaneous change: the erect head fell into its ordinary stoop, the eyes were cast down, the figure shrank back shy and trembling, and Mr Oswald drew a long breath, and threw himself back in his chair, as the Reverend Robert brought down the tone of the conversation to the common-place and prosaic, by saying, with some emphasis,—

"I perfectly agree with Miss Buchanan."

Mrs Gray had been somewhat startled. Mr Inches set her right again. She shook her head.

"Ah, young people, young people; it is quite natural, no doubt; but you don't know—you will find it out only too soon."

Mr Whyte rose from his chair with some displeasure, and lifted his fine hand in admonition.

"Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say unto you rejoice."

The animation of his words lighted up his gentle face; not alone in the sunshine and in the fair earth, but in the Lord with whom was the wonderful "fellowship" of the holy man. It was meet that there should be gladness in all his peaceful life, for this was its charm and spell.

Mrs Whyte changed her seat. She took the chair which

Mrs Gray left vacant beside Lillas and Helen, to the great contentment of the Reverend Robert.

"I warn you, young ladies, against my sister," said Mrs Whyte, cheerfully. "Agnes has had a great deal of grief herself, and she thinks it is the common lot, and is anxious to prepare others for all that befell her. She means it very kindly, though I think she is mistaken; but, Miss Maxwell, you must not adopt these melancholy views of hers—it is quite soon enough to be sorrowful when sorrow comes."

"You warn *me*, Mrs Whyte," said Lillas, smiling. "Have you no fear for Helen?"

"No, Miss Buchanan has quite reassured me," said Mrs Whyte; "and I am not sure that I should at any time have feared for her so much as for you. Is not Mossgray very quiet—shall I say dull? We have an idea that your guardian is a melancholy man, Miss Maxwell."

"No, indeed, no," said Lillas. "He likes to be alone, and is a thoughtful man, but Mossgray is not melancholy—if melancholy means anything like unhappiness. He may be pensive as the stars are—but not sad—never gloomy. You think so, Helen?"

Helen assented in a single word, for she had been led into saying far more than she intended before, and was considerably ashamed and embarrassed now; especially as the Reverend Robert was drawing up his stately figure close beside her, and Mrs Whyte looked interested and curious.

"You must come to the Manse and see me, Miss Buchanan," said Mrs Whyte, "when the days are longer. I shall expect you often, mind, and we are really rather attractive people; besides myself, you know, there is Paulus, whom everybody has a kindness for, and two treasures of bairns. You will like Paulus," continued the minister's wife, glancing at him with a kindly smile, as he sat talking to Mrs Oswald: "and Paulus would say, I think, that you were not likely to cast out with me, and of course there can be but one opinion about the bairns. I shall expect you, Miss Buchanan, and I shall expect Miss Maxwell. It is not a very long walk, and you will do me a kindness if you come."

The words were easily said, and it was very true that two such guests as Lillas and Helen would most pleasantly relieve the quietness of the Manse of Kirkmay; but they made the heart of the young schoolmistress glad. The delicate percep-

tion which gave this special invitation to *her* rather than to the well-friended Liliās—the true friendliness and appreciation which could venture to praise to her its own especial household. It is surely true that *words* will rise up hereafter in judgment against us : so well and gracefully as we might heal and cheer and encourage with these magic utterances ; so often as we make them poisoned arrows, to pierce, and kill, and wound.

“ And I am sure,” said Miss Insches, who had been listening with great edification, “ it would be a real charity if you would call whiles on me. I might maybe no presume on asking Miss Maxwell, because she’s a gey bit from the town, besides being delicate ; but as you’re so near hand, Miss Buchanan, it wouldna be much trouble, and I would take it real kind. I’m sure Robert never wearies speaking about you, and he would be as glad as me : for ye see—Eh, is that you Robert ? Was you wanting me ? ”

Robert had secretly, in vehement shame and anger, pulled his indiscreet sister’s sleeve, and the result was, that the innocent Miss Insches turned suddenly round upon him, and revealed the artifice he had used to stay her disclosures. The Reverend Robert blushed to the very hair. Helen shrank back, shyly conscious. Mrs Whyte cast wicked, intelligent glances at the minister, and Miss Insches, seeing that something was wrong, and that she had blundered, looked about her in bewildered penitence.

“ Eh, Robert,” she repeated under her breath, “ is’t me ? ”

The Reverend Robert was too much annoyed to laugh, but Mrs Whyte did, as she came to the rescue.

“ I think when Paulus has his duty over to-morrow, that you and I must make some calls, Mr Insches. Miss Buchanan, will you introduce me to your mother ; and may I venture, Miss Maxwell, to come as far as Mossgray ? ”

Liliās answered for both. Miss Insches’ last master-stroke had entirely silenced Helen.

Halbert all this time had been alone, or nearly so, and now Liliās perceived him at the other end of the room, patiently listening to Mrs Gray ; so there was a general movement to rescue him. Halbert had felt rather *de trop* this evening ; he was almost inclined to chime in at first with the lamentations of the mournful lady ; and it was a relief to all parties when Mr Insches changed places with the young heir of Mossgray.

CHAPTER XIX.

Through the earth there runs a sound
Music of green nooks and hills,
For Spring, soft-handed, frees the bound
Rivers and sweet rills;
Trickling, singing, from the fountains,
All day long they cheer the mountains.
So the warm streams of the heart
Sometimes 'neath the ice grow chill,
Till the Spring with kindly art
Wakes the sleeping rill,
And like the brooks, old loves, new flowing,
Stir all fair things to happier growing.

THE spring sunshine began to dawn on the waiting world again. The gentle days prolonged themselves, lingering out in long, soft, poetic twilights. Lillias Maxwell had been nearly a year at Mossgray.

And Halbert Graeme began to feel himself in great want of some outlet for his young activity. He said little now about the momentous matter which had brought him to Mossgray, and though he did sometimes complain in his letters to the North that the fortune which it was so very necessary to make was as far in the distance as ever, and that there seemed no prospect of being able to reach even the beginning, Halbert was by no means discontented; this genial country life was natural to him: he only wanted something to do; and after a considerable agitation he attained to that. Mossgray graciously permitted himself to be made an experimental farmer, and with great glee Halbert plunged into the desired labour.

"Nae fears," said the sagacious Saunders Delvie, Mossgray's man, as Mrs Mense expressed her fears to him, that the strength of "the young Laird" might be taxed too greatly; "it's naething but a maggot. I'll just gie him till he wearies; when he's dune out, he can aye rest when he likes, and that's mair than ye can say for mony a hardworking man. Gie him the length o' his tether; he'll tire sooner than anybody else."

"Ay, but Mr Halbert's an active lad," said the house-

keeper; "and so was his father before him; if the tane had but been as innocent as the tither; but ane canna mend what's past."

A frown came darkly over the face of Mossgray's man.

"Ye say weel, neighbour; but an folk canna mend their ill deeds they maun tak the penalty. If it's but in this world it's weel for themselves, and if it's in another pairt than this, it's a' the mair just and righteous."

"Oh, Saunders Delvie," exclaimed Janet Mense, "ye're a hard man!"

"Maister Charlie Graeme did sair ill to this house," said Mrs Mense emphatically, "and meant mair than he could do—but for a' that, look at the Laird, Saunders, and learn by him. Is he no making this lad like a son o' Mossgray? is he no doing a' that the kindest father could do for him? but no to speak o' the Laird, Saunders, there's mysel. I likit Miss Lucy Murray weel, and there was never ane but likit Mr Adam; and baith o' them did that lad's faither do his warst to bring to misery. I am a lone woman, and have nae bairns o' my ain; but the time my heart was warmest and fullest, thae young folk—though they were gentles, and no like me, were gaun and coming about the house, and I thought mair o' them than ever I did o' mysel. But for a' the ill he did to them—Saunders, I mind that we need mercy ourself every day, and I can say, Charlie Graeme, I forgive ye."

"Ay," said Saunders Delvie sternly, "but he didna dishonour the honest name that your forbears and you had laboured in puirtith and hard toil to keep free of offence in the sight of God and man. He wasna that near to you, that his shame should be yours to bear, the very time that your ain misery for his sin was rugging at your heart; ye dinna ken—and I seek nocht but to bear my ain burden out of the sight of man."

His bushy gray eyebrows twitched—his face was moved; this man too had a history.

"Eh, but Saunders, man!" continued the good old house-keeper with some timidity, "it's no like you—I'm meaning it's no like what we should do to be so hard on the puir lad; mind how young he was; and for a' that he did ance ill, mind that he's your ain."

"I mind," said Saunders emphatically, while a sudden yearning seemed to contend on his harsh face with the stern

condemnation of justice ; “ woman, ye dinna ken ! If he had been less to me—ay, if he *was* less to me now, think ye I wad have done what I have done. It’s nae use speaking ; do I no see the tears in the wife’s auld e’en morning and nicht ? do I no ken wha she’s aye thinking o’ and yearning ower like a weak woman as she is ? but I say he shall never cross again the door of the honest house he has brought shame upon—never ! ”

There was a stern fire in the old man’s eye, and he went hastily out to his work as if he felt ashamed of having been drawn into this revelation of his household grief. He was, naturally, a man with very strong and passionate feelings, and one of those harsh and powerful minds, which at any cost of misery to themselves will cling to their severe and abstract conceptions of justice. His only child, a youth of some promise in their humble sphere, had fallen a few years before into the brutalizing practices of rural vice. He had formed discreditable connections, involved himself in the worst company that Fendie could afford, and to crown all his offences, had finally, in a moment of temptation, stolen some trifling sum from his master. Saunders and his wife were in the sober meridian of life when they married, and this lad Peter was the son of their old age, the secret idol of the old man’s vehement heart. But no one knew the might of love which the somewhat stern father lavished upon the son ; and when his criminal folly came to its climax, the mother, the neighbours, the injured master himself, stood aside with awe while Saunders repudiated and disowned the unhappy culprit. *They* called him harsh and cruel ; but the guilty youth himself, even while he trembled under his father’s sentence, discovered for the first time the strong love which in its agony banished him from its home and presence. A kindred strength awoke in the son’s undisciplined spirit. Seeing how bitterly the hopes set on his head had been disappointed, in bitter repentance he turned from the closed door, eager to leave the place of his early sins, and in some strange unknown country to conquer, by the help of God, himself and his fate. For two long years now he had been absent—where his father did not know, nor would inquire ; and still in the bitterness of the strong love which burned within him, the old man repudiated the prodigal.

Mossgray and his ward were together in the garden : Saunders hastily avoided them, and went to work alone,

where no one could see the stern swelling of his heart. It was the great fault of Saunders' own class, that they were obtuse to notice and slow to punish those sins of youth, so fatal to all goodness, which the world is content to call follies. Saunders himself was harshly pure and just; he thought it was something of this moral blindness, so common among his humble neighbours, which made Mossgray receive so kindly the son of Charlie Graeme.

Lilias was leaning on her guardian's arm; they were going to the water-side.

"Halbert will make us rich, Lilias," said Mossgray; "I am glad the lad likes work; but I fancy we must come to some decision about him; let me hear what you advise."

"You suffered me to speak of Halbert once before, Mossgray," said Lilias, "while he was as much a stranger to you as to me."

"Yes, I remember I did," said the old man, smiling, "and you were very foolishly generous as youthful people are. Must I fall back on my memory for the arguments you used then, Lilias? have you nothing new to advance: are your opinions still the same?"

"I have nothing new to advance save the good qualities which now you know, Mossgray," said Lilias, returning the smile. "Halbert himself—so frank and simple and manly; there could be no better representative of the old Graemes."

The old man shook his head.

"You are a special pleader, Lilias; you want to rouse what family pride may be in me. Well, granting that Halbert is all you say—manly and frank and simple—and he is so: I acknowledge that my old friend Monikie, and the good healthful atmosphere of the North, have done credit to themselves in their pupil—what then? does it follow that Halbert must get my land; must be my heir—my heir—is he like my heir, Lilias?"

"You could not have an heir like yourself, Mossgray," said Lilias. "I think you must be alone, and have no successor to rival you; for nature does not seem to do it. Nature only makes one in a race here and there who would take up orphans like Halbert and me, and set us in families, under the shelter of his kindness—therefore you will have no heir, Mossgray—none but humanity; and on some other spirit, in some other country, your mantle will fall when you yourself use it no longer; for you will have no heir."

"Hush, Liliass," said Mossgray; "shall I have to train you to more philosophical modes of thinking? I did not think you were so heterodox. We must bring Reid and Brown and Dugald Stewart down upon you. Halbert himself has some metaphysics, dogmatical as their parent, Monikie. We shall have a regular breaking of spears, Liliass; though I think your friend Helen and you, on behalf of the poets, might rout the philosophers if you looked well to your weapons. By the by, I like that friend of yours—you suit each other well; and how does it fare with Mr Oswald's resolution? Has he learned to break it yet with a good grace?"

"I do not hear now, since Hope is not at home to keep me informed," said Liliass; "but I think he must be melting; only his son is absent, and there is no visible progress. Mr Oswald is an obstinate man, and Helen is proud; I see that there is an evident consciousness both on her side and his; but, Mossgray, you have done William Oswald harm; you have given him a rival."

"I, Liliass?" said the old man; "is it Halbert? I should regret that."

"No, it is not Halbert," said Liliass; "I think Halbert is not eligible at present to be any one's rival at Fendie: it is Mr Insches, Mossgray. I think your kindness to Helen when they were all with us has encouraged Mr Insches to look over her low degree. It is your fault: if you had not noticed her, he would have given up what incipient admiration he had of poor Helen; but you gave him the countenance he needed."

"You are severe, Liliass," said Mossgray; "but I like the lad. He has a young man's natural weakness on some points, but there is good stuff in him; and who is to be successful—our grave friend William, or his handsome rival? I should think there was some danger. I fancy I must come to the rescue myself, and explain to Mr Oswald, by my own experience, that resolutions were made to be broken. Does that suit Hope's tactics and yours, Liliass, or are you working more artfully?"

"Hope is my captain; I must wait for further orders," said Liliass, smiling; "but, Mossgray, this has nothing to do with Halbert."

"Very true," said the old man. "I see you can hold to your original premises, Liliass; well, then, what of Halbert?—let us return to our disputation."

"I think, Mossgray," said Lillas, gravely, "since you suffer me to think on the subject, that it would be far better for Halbert if you made your decision soon."

"It is very sensible," said Mossgray, looking at her with his gracious smile. "I acknowledge that if I did not suffer you to think on the subject—which I fear would be difficult to do—I should lose a good counsellor; but do you know, Lillas, Mrs Mense tells me that matters might be so arranged as to make your inheritance and Halbert's one;—could that be accomplished, think you?"

It was very evident that Mossgray did not think it could, and the supposition was too harmless to call more than a passing shadow of colour over the pale cheek of his ward.

"No, indeed, Mossgray," she said, simply; "did I not say that Halbert was not free to be any one's rival? I mean," continued Lillas, with a deeper blush as she observed the inference to be drawn from her words, "that Halbert is very faithful to the northern Menie, and that I am Halbert's very grave and elderly adviser and friend, and must always remain so, did we live under the same roof all our lives."

Mossgray desired to have his ward's confidence; he did not smile at her inference nor at her blush; neither did he ask what they meant; the delicate old man felt it was meet that Lillas should be shy of such confidences, even to him.

"Well," he said, "I will give up that; it would be very desirable no doubt, Lillas, and would solve our problem beautifully. If Halbert and you were good bairns I have no doubt you would adopt this solution for my particular convenience; but if, as you say, Halbert is already in bondage, and you are so wise and old as you tell me you are, there is no more to be said on the subject, and we must think of some other plan. Let me hear your proposal, Lillas."

Lillas looked up in some surprise.

"Did you think I was Helen Buchanan, Mossgray? No, indeed, I do not make plans. I only do what I am bidden when they please me, and dissent when they do not; but I am no originator, Mossgray—you know I am not."

Mossgray smiled again.

"Well, Lillas, we shall suppose that I myself form the plan, according to your counsel, and that we make Halbert heir of Mossgray; and now there comes a grave consideration: what am I to do with you, my good Lillas? Will you

be content with the little provision I can make for you, independent of these lands? Nay, if you are not like your friend Helen in making plans, I cannot have you resemble her in pride. I speak to you, you know, as if you had been Lilius Graeme; and your future—must I not provide for that?”

“No, Mossgray.” Her head was bent down, but the animated unusual light played about her face like sunshine—her voice was very low, and trembled as with some hidden music. She did not meet the kindly inquiring look which her guardian turned upon her; she only answered—“No, Mossgray.”

“The future is cared for then?” said the gentle old man, in his delicate tenderness. “I must not ask how, Lilius, but I may believe and infer, may I not?—and guess that there is some one labouring under warmer skies for my good child, and hope that he is wise and generous, and worthy of her. Tell him that I too will grow jealous for his honour and good report, though I am not told his name, and that together, you and I, who alone know him here, will bid God speed to his labour:—shall it not be so?”

Lilius could not lift her eyes just then, for the tears' sake that were under their lids; but when she could, she looked up in simple confidence into the face of her guardian. She did not speak, and they went slowly on, for some time, in silence. Her mind was in a pleasant, grateful tumult; she thought of the time when he to whose labour Mossgray bade God speed should thank the old man for his generous care of the orphan; and over the fair future she looked forth through the sunny haze of hope—the indefinite golden mist which has in it a charm wanting to the clearer landscape—the magic of the unknown.

But as they continued their walk, shy half-sentences fell on the ear of Mossgray—conveying a confidence which he received gladly, though he did not ask it. How the unsettled family, in one of their short sojournings in a great, bustling, commercial town of England, had met this unknown—how he came from an Orcadian island far off in the vexed Northern seas, and in his youthful energy was bound for the golden East—how he did so tenderly regard and honour the mother over whom Lilius still wept tears, because he also had a mother in his solitary home by the sea, and, except this one nearest

friend, was alone in the world ; but Lillas did not tell Mossgray how her heart throbbed in glad wonder at sight of the ancient portrait, and in sound of the pleasant name in the old house at Murrayshaugh. It was but a fanciful resemblance, and the name was not an unusual one. The pleasure she had in this, she kept as one little secret gladness to herself. It was but a girlish, affectionate fancy ; for the son of the far Orcades could have no connection with the old southern family, whose last representatives were wandering on foreign soil, or laid in strange graves. She smiled at herself for setting so great store by the shadowy resemblance of the portrait ; it was too small a thing to tell Mossgray.

END OF BOOK II.

BOOK III
CHANGES.

CHAPTER I.

The merry ploughboy cheers his team,
Wi' joy the tentie seedsman stalks.—BURNS.

"MOSSGRAY," said Halbert Graeme, as they sat next morning at their cheerful breakfast-table, "I wish you would come out with me to-day, and see these fields at Shortrigg—they are in a very bad state: small, oddly-shaped fields, "three neukit," as Saunders call them, with quite a superabundance of hedges. I should like to sweep those encumbrances away, and bring them into better working order. Will you come and see them, Mossgray?"

"Halbert, my man," said Mossgray, smiling, "I am too old to learn—even your training will scarcely make a good farmer of me, I am afraid; and I give you full discretion, you know."

"But, Mossgray," persisted Halbert, "I am sure you have no concern for those thriftless hedges; and good agriculture—"

"Is a very necessary, noble, and honourable art," said the Laird, "perfectly so, Halbert; and I am by no means a sentimental admirer of thriftless hedges; but I am old, you know, and not a good judge: you must take it into your own hands."

Halbert was not quite satisfied.

"Still, Mossgray, if you are not engaged—"

The good Mossgray could not deny the youth his request.

"Well, Halbert, if it must be. Come then, let us set about this business of yours."

Halbert was very full of his undertaking. He began to tell Mossgray what his crops were to be, and the measures he would take with obstinate land, which was not naturally obedient to the discipline of the plough. The country looked very cheerful as they passed on. Round about, skirting the horizon on every side were ranges of low hills, some rich with fir trees and softer young spring foliage to the very top; some dark with moss and heather unbloomed. Winding roads, white far-seen lines, lost themselves among the hills, and

through the trees, which divided their path from the river, glimpses of the wan water, flowing on full and broad to the sea, glimmered through the soft, gay, fluttering leaves of spring. Turning back on the elevation which they had reached, the full Firth, quivering like molten silver, stretched between them and the clear creeks and villages of the English shore, over whose stillness muffled mountains watched in the background; and looming out against the pale sky in the West, his broad sides darkened here and there, as if with stationary shadows, rose the bluff Scottish hill, whose strong brow every night was crowned with the glory of the sunset. There was a hum of voices in the pleasant air, and ploughs were turning up the rich, dark, fragrant earth, and the "tentie seedsman" stalked about the fields. The sky and the leaves were soft and fresh, so fresh and soft as they only are in the early year, and the refreshed land seemed to open its moist breast with gladness to the kindly processes of spring.

"I think there is something grand, Halbert," said the old man, pausing to look back, "in the art, which out of that bare earth can bring seed and bread. I should rather have myself endowed with this wealth of the soil, were I young like you, than choose the barren, metallic fortune you were aspiring after a short time since. This, you know, pleases me; to inherit the soil and the sky, the seed-time and harvest, the sunshine and the rain of heaven; it seems to place us in more immediate dependance on the Maker of all, the great Suzerain above, of whom we hold this feoff, for the honour of His kingly name and the service of His people. I like it, Halbert—it is a greater gift than barren wealth. It pleases me to feel myself, with Paul, a vassal—a *Knecht*, as your German has it—holding my lands under the fealty vow and oath of true service. I would we did but better remember that we stood here feudatories of high Heaven."

The youth assented modestly; he thought it did not become him to do more.

Mossgray stood for a moment longer, looking with loving eyes over his fair country, as it lay below the sunbeams, stirred with the spring; and then he turned to take Halbert's arm, and they went on again, resuming their former conversation about crops and ploughs and draining. The old man was not so ignorant of these matters as he called himself, and could give valuable counsel to the young experimentalist.

"But, Halbert," said Mossgray, "Lilias tells me I am

injuring you in keeping you here so long, where you cannot pursue your own course as you desire to do; we should rather talk of it than of those rural matters. What say you, Halbert?"

Halbert was rather startled; he did not know what to say, for, to tell the truth, he had quite forgotten the "course" which his kinsman assumed he was so eager to begin, and at present was perfectly content, and had no wish for change.

"I will be glad to do what you think best, Sir," he said, with a little hesitation.

"But the question is not what I think best, but what you wish," said the old man. "Is it the case that you are impatient of losing time at Mossgray, Halbert?"

Halbert was very honest.

"Well, Sir, to speak truly, no—I have not been thinking of losing time; but no doubt it is very necessary that I should begin."

"Begin what, Halbert?"

"To maintain myself, Sir; to cease to be a burden—"

"My good Halbert," said Mossgray, interrupting him, "I should never have spoken of it, if that were all; but Lillias does not hesitate to tell me that I do wrong to keep you undecided so long; so you must let me know what your own views are, and how I can help you most agreeably to yourself. Be honest and tell me frankly; and when I have heard your own ideas, you must give me the privilege of my age, and let me decide."

There was a pause.

"I suppose," said Halbert, hesitating a little, "that it must be business?"

"Does your gift lie in that way?" said Mossgray, smiling.

Halbert was a little annoyed, and jealous of ridicule.

"I think I might be able to do as much as I undertook," he answered, with a little warmth. "All sorts of men succeed in business. I do not think, with submission to your better judgment, Mossgray, that, except perseverance and industry, and a stout heart, there is any very special gift required."

"Bravely answered, Halbert," said Mossgray; "but these are invaluable qualities all, and as necessary for a conscientious country Laird, as for your great merchant of Glasgow or Liverpool. But let us speak more gravely; before you were so wise and sensible as to come here to me, it was my custom to consider myself the last Graeme of Mossgray."

Now, Halbert, supposing that our ancestors had entailed these lands, in what position would you have been ? ”

Halbert blushed and was embarrassed ; it was impossible that such a thought should not have sometimes entered the young man's mind ; but he really had not self-interested views ; and now he remained silent with too much good taste to disclaim, while he yet felt awkwardly uncomfortable under the fear of such an imputation.

“ The race would have been resuscitated in you,” said the old man ; “ you would have brought new life to the withering stock ; for, Halbert, you are the only remaining heir of the Graemes of Mossgray.”

“ I have the name, Sir,” said Halbert quickly, his embarrassment growing on him as he met his kinsman's eye ; “ it is the share of the family inheritance which comes to me ; and the provision which you made for the helpless portion of my life, Mossgray, is more than a cadet's share. Now that I am able to make use of the faculties which your kindness and my good master's have trained and made available, I hope to do no dishonour to the name.”

The Laird of Mossgray looked steadily into his young kinsman's glowing, animated face ; the natural diffidence which subdued its expression, and the charm of its simple, frank manliness were very pleasant in the old man's eyes. He held out his hand and grasped that somewhat astonished, irresolute one of Halbert's.

“ I have no fear,” he said, kindly ; “ I believe you will be a good steward of your name ; but remember, Halbert, that there devolves upon you an inheritance of old duties, old kindnesses, old generousities, along with the old lands ; and that I will as surely leave you heir to all the good purposed and planned by your predecessors, bravely and faithfully to fulfil and increase it, as I leave you heir of Mossgray.”

Halbert looked up with a sudden start ; the words did not carry their proper significance to him, for he had expected nothing like this.

“ If I had thought you would weary of the lifetime which remains to me,” said Mossgray, “ I might have kept this secret from you, lest you should be tempted to wish my few remaining days shortened ; but I have all confidence in you, Halbert, and what I give you is your right.”

Halbert said something now ; but it was said in so strange a tumult that the words would not bear recording. Never-

theless they answered their purpose, and Mossgray did not think the less either of them or of the speaker, because they were by no means elegantly put together, or rather were not put together at all.

And then the old man, more openly than he had done with Liliass, sought, and after some happy hesitation, received, the confidence of Halbert; and then some arrangements were made, very much to the satisfaction of the heir of Mossgray. The old man decided that Halbert's "being settled" should be for some time delayed, but did by no means say anything to the detriment of Menie Monikie. To wait a little was all the condition he asked.

The fields at Shortrigg were unfortunate on this particular day. The young farmer had things in his head of more immediate interest than draining, and while he tried to keep his mind awake to the question of the superabundant hedges, incipient sentences of the triumphant letter, which should convey those wonderful tidings to the North, floated through his joyous head, to the entire bewilderment of himself and his companion. It would not do; the young Utopia routed the sober science of agriculture, and Mossgray, with secret smiles, invented some kind pretext for sending Halbert home. It pleased the old man that the youth should be so pleasantly disturbed, and his eagerness to communicate his joy to the only home he had ever known gave additional satisfaction to the gentle heart of Adam Graeme.

"I did not think," said Mossgray to himself half-aloud, as he lingered at the corner of one of the condemned "three-neukit" fields, watching the rapid progress of Halbert, as, bounding over all manner of obstacles, he carried his exulting heart home to Mossgray, "I did not think that my old pragmatical friend, Monikie, could have succeeded in producing such a lad as Halbert; and I fancy I must see this Menie of his, and renew my acquaintance with her father. And I too have children. Resolutions, resolutions! what mockery they are; that I might have debarred myself such companions as these for the sake of words rashly spoken!"

He turned round, shaking his head with a smile. Saunders Delvie was standing near, evidently listening. He had heard the conclusion of the soliloquy.

"Well, Saunders," said Mossgray, "I believe you do not agree with me?"

"Na, Mossgray," answered Saunders, harshly, "I haud

by the auld law. Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oath."

"But I am speaking of resolutions, Saunders," said the Laird, "uncertain mortal resolves, ignorantly made, which better knowledge shows us were foolish and wrong. You would not have me hold by anything so weak as that?"

"Ay, Mossgray," said the stern old man, holding his ground decidedly; "but an ane was wise, ane would make nae vows in ignorance; and when a vow was made, would keep it, if it was to the very death."

"But, Saunders, my man," said the good master, kindly, "you know me well enough to know that I am not so wise as that; and I am too old to learn."

"Mossgray," said Saunders Delvie, "I'm just your serving-man, but I'm in years mysel'—and I can take nae rule but Scripture, though I would do as muckle to pleasure my maister as most folk; but the Word's positive and clear. Vow unto the Lord and pay."

"You are more skilled in argument than I am, Saunders," said Mossgray, "but I think we can settle that point between us. The vow was a vow of offering—of special service, or special gifts, or of the sacrifices of that grand old symbolic Hebrew law. It did not by any means refer to such frail, inconsiderate resolutions, Saunders, as are common to this humanity of ours."

"Ay, but if it was a vow before the Lord," said Saunders, in his strong, harsh, emphatic voice; "if before the Lord, Mossgray, ye had spread out the ill that troubled ye, as the guid King Hezekiah did the proud words of the Assyrian langsyne, and put forth ane—I'm saying nae man in particular; it's a case just like what might happen wi' onybody—put forth ane, I say, solemnly out of your heart and out of your house, as an ill-doer and a reprobate; would the man that daured to break that no be man-sworn, Mossgray, having vowed before the Lord?"

There was a certain huskiness and tremor in the harsh voice of the old man. They stood together strangely contrasted; the master in his benign and gentle humbleness, the servant in the stern and rugged strength of his pride.

"Saunders," said Mossgray, "the utmost vision of our wisdom, you know, is very poor and dim; and will the Lord hold you, do you think, to an oath made in ignorance, and dimly, as are all things mortal, even though you place it in

His keeping? If what you vowed in His presence was an ill vow, Saunders, be thankful that this privilege of humanity is left to you, and that God gives you power to change—to change; it is a great gift this. That when the purer light comes upon us we may follow its course wherever it travels, and that all our vain purposes and foolish vows are not bound on us, but that gratefully in sight of heaven we may throw our old encumbrances away, and change. We are growing old, Saunders, we are travelling towards the setting sun; and by and by we will lose this power. Think of it before it leaves your hands—mind what a gracious thing it is, given of God—and make merciful use of it while you may.”

Mossgray turned round as he concluded, and bent his steps to his favourite Waterside. He had not unfrequently had such controversies with his stern old serving-man; and pitying the forlorn heart which, out of its very excess of harsh, strong love, could debar itself so relentlessly from the mild humanities of nature, he had taken pains to leaven the mind of Saunders with his own gracious philosophy. But it would not do; the rugged, intense spirit buckled its harsh vow upon itself like armour, while the wiser poet-man opened the heart which could not be old to all the gentle influences of the earth and of the heaven.

CHAPTER II.

Close by the sunshine is the cloud;
And yonder o'er the hills, the shadows pass
Like breath; across this field they flit, they hover—
And now 'tis bright, and now 'tis dim, and now
There's not a cloud in heaven. Look up again;
Lo! all the sky is veiled, the sun shut out—
There's nothing here but sadness.—ANONYMOUS.

Mrs BUCHANAN was in high spirits. The friendship of Lillas, and the honour intended for her by the Reverend Robert Insches, had opened a new life to Helen. She was no more the neglected and solitary schoolmistress. The young lady of Mossgray was a frequent visitor at their humble house. Mrs Whyte of Kirkmay had called to make a definite beginning of their friendship—the plaintive Mrs Gray became a regular visitor. Mr Insches took every possible opportunity of stealing into William Oswald's vacant corner in the quiet parlour. It pleased the good mother "to see her bairn respected like the lave."

And the change was also very pleasant to Helen. She had been at Kirkmay, and much enjoyed the hospitalities of the Manse—she saw Lillas frequently; and even the handsome head of the Reverend Robert was an agreeable variety, breaking the blank of the dim wall, which for whole years of past evenings had been the only thing she had to look across to. She was still much alone; but the much was not always, and the monotony thus occasionally broken became monotony no longer. The firmament of their quiet life was brightened; it was a pleasant change.

But other changes were progressing; as the spring grew into summer some shadow fell upon Lillas Maxwell. No one knew what it was, nor how produced, but the old paleness returned to her cheek, and the old sinking to her heart. There was no external sign of sorrow or suffering. The change fell upon her like a cloud—such a cloud as does sometimes glide across the sun in the early glory of his shining. She was very calm, very quiet, very thoughtful, but in moments when she fancied no one saw her, her fingers sought each

other painfully, and were clasped together, as hands are clasped only in grief or in prayer. But the cause of this she told to no one; and even to her guardian's affectionate inquiries, she only answered, "It is nothing, Mossgray; indeed it is nothing."

Very early on a bright May day, Lillas went hastily up along the banks of the wan water, to the house of Murrayshaugh. She had been up that morning earlier than even the wakeful Janet Mense, as if she could not rest; and now she had stolen forth, avoiding any company. She walked more quickly than was usual to her, and over the face, which still wore its look of constitutional calmness, shades of unwonted colour were wavering to and fro; for the Lily of Mossgray was sick at heart—sick with the fever of anxiety—the hope and the fear.

She had become a frequent visitor of Isabell Brown; the old woman was fretfully kind to Lillas; and when the days were warm enough to permit her to receive those calls in Miss Lucy's parlour, Isabell was very communicative, and told tales of the Murrays, their old grandeur and their present exile with much satisfaction to herself. Lillas meanwhile sat on one of the faded high-backed chairs, opposite the wall on which hung the portrait, and listened pleasantly. Isabell took the young lady of Mossgray's admiration of the picture as a personal compliment to herself, and there began to spring up a genuine liking for her in the breast of the little sharp old woman; she almost thought Lillas worthy to take rank next to Miss Lucy.

On this particular day Isabell's dissertation began as usual.

"Ye see, I canna tell what gars Murrayshaugh stay away in thae foreign pairts, and him has a guid house o' his ain to bide in; but there's nae accounting for folk's tastes. For my ain part, I wadna gie Murrayshaugh just where ye're sitting this minute, for a king's palace; but he's an awfu' proud man, Murrayshaugh, and nae doubt he has a guid richt."

Lillas made some indistinct response; it did not much matter what it was, for Isabell desired a good listener more than anything else.

"It's maist folk's pride to be thought rich," continued the little old housekeeper, with some ostentation; "but Murrayshaugh's a man far frae the common; it's his notion to hae the house bare, like as he was puir. It's naething but folk's fancy—an' likes ae thing, and ane anither. I wadna

wonder noo but ye've heard that the Murrays were gaun down the brae ? there's aye some havers rattling at the heels o' a gentleman's ain fancy ; as if it was needcessity, when it's naething but his pleasure."

Lilias involuntarily glanced round the faded bare room ; its look of decayed gentility made a dreary comment on the assumption of the old adherent of the ruined family ; but her eye rested again, where it rested so often, on the portrait, and she sighed and did not answer.

"You're no weel the day," said Isabell, sympathetically ; "and yet it's bonnie cheerie weather that should be guid for young folk. Eh Miss Maxwell ! ane wad think ye kent that picture, ye tak sic weary looks at it ; but ye wad never see onybody like that ?"

"I think I have," said Lilias, with a faint smile.

"Like the auld picture that was like Mr Hew ? tell us where. It bid to be himsel ; there's only the twa o' them in the world, and wha should hae the kindly face but their ainsels ? I'm saying tell me where ye saw him—for charity tell me where !"

"It was not Mr Murray, Isabell," said Lilias ; "it was a friend—a person I knew in England."

"And he was like that !" said Isabell. "Do ye think I dinna ken that nae fremd man could be like that ? will you tell me what they ca'ed him ? Ye'll read in books whiles, o' gentles for their ain pleasure taking anither name—it bid to be Mr Hew."

"His name was Grant," said Lilias, "he was not Mr Hew ; he was a young man—quite young."

"And what should he be else but young ?" said the little old woman, pattering up and down with her short, unequal, agitated steps. "Div ye think he's withered and auld like me ? I tell ye he's the gallantest lad ye ever set your e'e upon ; ye may ca' that like him, but it's naething till him—the spark that was in his bonnie e'en, and his brent broo—as if I didna mind ! If he was far blythe and lightsomer like than that, and yet had a face that could be wae when need was, for ither folk afore himsel ; and if he had a presence o' his ain that gar't ye bow, and a smile that made ye fain ; then I say it was Mr Hew ye saw, and nae ither living man !"

There was some wonderful power in the old woman's words. The sad pale head of Lilias slowly followed her motions, as if by some magnetic attraction. She did not

speaking; but as Isabell ceased, she closed her eyelids painfully, perhaps the better to see again the person thus truthfully described—perhaps to shut in the tears.

The housekeeper pattered up and down for a while in silence; at length she stopped short immediately before Liliass, and repeated with emphasis,—

“I’m telling ye it was Mr Hew.”

“It was not Mr Hew, Isabell,” said Liliass gently, as she rose to go away. “It was one whose home is very far from this; who came from the northern islands far away; and it is a mere fancy of mine that he is like the portrait. He was not Mr Hew.”

Isabell was not satisfied—she accompanied her visitor to the door with many mutterings; the “kindly face” could belong only to a Murray, “it bid to be Mr Hew.”

Liliass turned away across the unsafe bridge, and went hastily up a steep lane which led to the Fendie high-road; she was not going home, and excited and anxious as she was. she could not bear the meditative calm of the Waterside.

It was a somewhat long walk, and Liliass was not like herself; her feverish hasty pace, and the painful flushes of colour which now and then crossed her brow, were unnatural. It was the first time she had been tried by this trial—the deadly anxiety with which we shiver and burn, when our sole hope is in peril, and there comes to us no tidings. She thought she could endure to hear of any certain calamity, but that blank of suspense was terrible to her—she could not bear it.

There had been mail after mail from the far East, but no letter for Liliass; and this was the day again. She had gone to Murrayshaugh to fill up the feverish blank of those slow moments; to look once more upon the face which never perhaps she should look upon with faith and trust again; and now she was hurrying to the decision of all those tremulous doubts and fears; if there was a letter to-day—and if there was none—

Her lips were parched—they would hardly meet to ask that question—“No.” Liliass looked into the postmaster’s face wistfully again; she would not hear the denial. “No, there were no letters for Miss Maxwell.”

And immediately there fell upon her a dead calm; a dull slow pain of quietness. She went out in her noiseless way, and glided down the street like a shadow; her heart was

sick—she could have seated herself by the road-side, and wept out the slow tears that were gathering under her eyelids, unconscious of any passers-by; but those who did pass by saw only the grave, pale, pensive Lily of Mossgray. The fever was over—there remained no present hope to distract her now, and she was calm again.

And then she began to think, and laboured bravely to put away from her those doubts and fears—but Lillas had not the impulsive energy of hope; the elastic life, which can fight and wrestle with sorrow at its strongest, was not in her; but she could do what the more buoyant could not have done—she could wait—and knowing the time that she must wait, she became calm.

She had intended going home, but as the shock softened, she changed her purpose. She went to borrow hope from Helen Buchanan, in one of those sudden yearnings for gentle company, with which sad hearts are sometimes seized. In her hush and faintness she wanted to have some living thing come in between her and her secret pain—she wanted to forget herself.

It was a holiday with Helen, and she was in a holiday mood, withstanding, with her natural enthusiasm, the gloomy dogmas of Mrs Gray, who was making a gracious call upon Mrs Buchanan. Mrs Buchanan did not much like the melancholy lady; her sanguine gentle temper recoiled from the sombre atmosphere which suited Mrs Gray; but she was Mrs Whyte's sister, and a "very respectable" acquaintance for Helen; so the good mother submitted pleasantly.

"Are you ill, Lillas?" said Helen.

"No, Helen, it is nothing," answered Lillas, gently. It was her universal answer; the melancholy cloud was indeed very visible, but she would not speak of the cause.

"My dear," said Mrs Gray—she was very affectionate, this good doleful woman—her very gloom increased her tenderness; "I am very much afraid you are not taking sufficient care of yourself. I am sure you got damp feet that day you were at the Manse, and Elizabeth would never think of asking you to change them. Elizabeth is really very careless about damp feet; she never heeds them herself—and I have known many a one get a consumption with them. You are looking very white, my dear; you must really take care."

"I am quite well, Mrs Gray," said Lillas; "perfectly well, I assure you."

Mrs Gray shook her head.

"Really, my dear, people never know. We are well to-day, and ill to-morrow: it is a strange world."

The proposition in this case being very abstract no one controverted it.

"When I see," continued Mrs Gray, oratorically, "young people going out on the world with such false notions as most of them have, poor things, it grieves me, Mrs Buchanan. So little as there is to enjoy after all, even if they get all they expect."

Mrs Buchanan, like Mr Oswald, had an old-fashioned prejudice that there was something orthodox in all this; a prejudice which made her diffident of answering.

"Poor things!" she echoed, with a slight falter; "but after all, Mrs Gray, we had light hearts in our own youth, and why should we discourage them? Sorrow aye comes soon enough."

A sigh from Lilius sounded like an assent: and the Lily of Mossgray indeed bent her weary head and assented. She began to believe that sorrow—nothing but sorrow—was the common lot.

But Helen's face was flushing—her small head growing erect. Mrs Gray turned round—she was no coward—to face her vowed antagonist.

"Miss Buchanan, my dear, I am speaking the truth. People say that the happiest part of life is youth; now just look at yourself. Toiling and labouring with these children; wearied with them every night, but just having to begin again every morning! with little time to yourself—to visit your friends, or read, or whatever you might choose. My dear, just look at it yourself. What have you to enjoy?"

Helen started.

"I have all the world—not this little humble house—not that school-room only; but the earth, and the sky, and the sea! Look at them—look at what God gives us—the sunshine and the clouds—the hills and the rivers—and you ask me what I have to enjoy? I have all the world! the weariness and the rest, the labour and the sleep, the night and the day, they are all given us, waiting our pleasures like the spirits of the old dreams. There is no one born into the earth who is not born rich, richer than kings, for we have all the world."

Mrs Gray was not prepared to answer this; she turned away to look from the window at the flowers, and prudently

shook her head, half at the wild doctrine, and half at the eager manner ; but she tilted no more at that time with Helen.

"Will you walk up with me to Mossgray, Helen ?" said Liliás, in the subdued melancholy voice which made the petition more urgent than a command ; and Helen consented at once. As they descended the steps at the bridge, and waded through the long, thick grass, which spread between the backs of the Fendie houses and the river, the pensive calm of Liliás touched the variable spirit of her friend. They began to talk in that tone of half-playful sadness which often veils over griefs which the speakers would not tell. It is the mood of speculation ; and they were neither of them too old for the girlish dreamy fancies, half-superstitious, which belong to our imaginative years.

"I wonder," said Liliás, "whether our minds are formed, Helen, to suit our fate ? I mean that our griefs are made for us, like our dwellings, with an individual fitness in them all. It seems so strange sometimes, as if on one person had fallen the fate which properly belonged to another ; yet it must be that we are suited always—our minds with our trials."

"It must be," said the bolder Helen, "for what would be joy to one is nothing to another, Liliás. I think I could fancy what my troubles would be, and yours ?"

"Tell me, Helen."

"Calm, grave, quiet sorrows, which will not have the fever of doubt and hope in them, which you will know certainly, and be able to weep silent tears for. Liliás, I think these will be yours ; and for me—I do not know—I think strong troubles that I can fight and battle with ; unquiet, living griefs that will keep me strained and labouring. Liliás, is it not my foolish fancies that make you sad ?"

"No. I do not see the sun just now, that is all," said the pale calm Liliás, shutting the eyes which were again full. "Helen, Helen, let us not say any more."

CHAPTER III.

“Concealment, like a worm i’ the bud,
Preyed on her damask cheek.”—TWELFTH NIGHT.

THE good Mossgray was pained for the dimness which hung about his adopted child. It was not positive sorrow—it was only a shadowy quietness as of a cloud, and very still and patient was Liliās. She was trying to live in the present only, because the future, when she tried to look upon it, made her heart sick; but it is not in the nature of humanity to do this, and her effort to confine herself to those individual hours, as one by one in their quietness they glided past her, made her only languidly indifferent to them all. For Liliās was alone: the hope in peril was her sole hope; kindly ties of kindred there were none for her, and except the old man, her guardian, to whom she looked with tenderness and reverence as to a father, but who yet was not her father, nor had part in all the associations of the past as members of one family have, she had none in the world but this one—and he!—

Where was he? was it peril or illness, or, painfulest of all, was it change, which produced this agony of silence? She tried to interdict herself from the constant speculation to which she could give no answer, but the yearning wonder and anxiety were too strong for the sorrowful heart; yet she said nothing. She could not blame him; she could not have another fancy that on his truth there lay the faintest suspicion; and with that haze of mild, subdued patience about her, she waited, and when she did think of the future time at all, thought of what lay beyond that fated, solemn day, on which tidings might and surely *must* come, as of some dreamy, unknown chaos, strange and chill, another life.

“I dinna ken what’s come to Miss Lillie,” said Mrs Mense, with a sigh.

“She’s ower muckle made o’, that’s it,” responded the sourer Janet.

“Woman, woman!” said the housekeeper, bitterly, “have ye nae memory o’ being ance young yoursel’, and maybe

having troubles in your ain heart that wadna bear telling ? but I needna speak to you."

"Na, I reckon no," said Janet. "Me! I wad just like to hear onybody say that I ever had a trouble a' my born days that mightna hae been visible to the hail world if it likit."

"And that just shows how little ye ken about it," said Mrs Mense; "if ye ever had a heart ava, it maun hae grown to bane twenty year ago. Are ye gaun to iron thae bits o' laces for the young lady or are ye no'?—for if ye're no', I'll do't mysel'—"

"The young lady—set her up!" said the housekeeper *de facto*. "Muckle right she has to the auld Lady Mossgray's guid lace. He'll be gieing her the land next; there's nae fuils like auld fuils."

"Janet Mense," said the old woman, "ye hae eaten the Laird's bread mony a year, and I hae suffered ye in the house, for a' your ill tongue, and for a' sae little worth as ye are; but if ye daur to say anither word against Mr Adam, I'll take ye by the shouthers and put ye forth from this door. I'll do it with my ain hands; sae ye ken."

Janet judged it prudent to sound a retreat. She began to spread the lace upon the table, preparatory to the process of ironing.

"The wife's in a creel," said Robbie Carlyle the fisherman, entering with his basket of flounders, thinly covered with a few grilse. "Wha's she gaun to pit to the door? If it's Effie, I'll hae nae mair dealings wi' ye, Mrs Mense; for Effie's Jamie Caryl's daughter, and Jamie's my second cousin; sae we'll be to 'gree again."

"And wha'll tire sunest o' that, Robbie, my man?" said the housekeeper.

"Faith, I dinna ken," said the bold fisherman, "there's waur folk nor me, guid wife; and if I missed your custom, ye wad miss my ca', ye ken; for I'm guid company—especially when I bring the cuddie."

"I would like to ken, Robbie Caryl," said Janet, "what the like o' you has to do wi' a cuddie."

"The like o' me! Ye're a sensible woman, Jen, but ye dinna ken a'thing; it's no to be expected. I ken few that does, by mysel', and Mossgray, and the minister; the like o' me! as if I wasna as 'sponsible a man as there is in the parish, and as weel entitled to hae ease to my shouthers!

There's thistles and dockens enow aboon tidemark to main-teen a dizzen cuddies, and he taks nae cleeding, puir beast; he's cheaper than a wean."

"Eh, Robbie!" said Mrs Mense, reproachfully, "to even the bits of innocent bairns to a brute beast!"

"He's a very decent beast," said Robbie. "I hae kent mony a waur Christian. The bairns! I hae half a dizzen curly pows o' them, ilk ane a greater sorrow than the tither, and I can tell ye it's Blackie out there that has the maist cause to compleen o' being evened to them. He's a decent, sober, 'sponsible beast, like my ain sel', and the little anes are even-down spirits, never out o' mischief, if it binna when they're tumbled in a dub; and then ane has the fash o' fishing them out again."

"It maun be awfu' dangerous for bairns, that weary marsh," said Mrs Mense, sympathetically.

"Hout, we never fash our heads about it," said the fisherman; "they're a' born to plouter amang saut water: it comes natural; when they do get a fa', the oldest anes can scramble out again, and there's nane o' them ower young to skirl. The wife whiles makes a fyke about it, but nane o' them 'll drown. You might maist say they were born in the sea; onyway, the tide was up on the very doorstane the nicht Sandy was born. It was an uncommon high tide; and the weans hae a story that he came in on the tap o' a muckle wave. Little Mary wad maist swear she saw the bit wee beld pow o' him in amang the foam; and the foam's nane o' the clearest, I can tell ye, when the Firth's in a roar."

"Wasna Monday nicht uncommon coarse doun-bye?" said Janet. "Did ye hear if there was ony skaith dune, Robbie?"

"Hout, woman, do ye ca' *yon* coarse?" answered the salt-water man. "Skaith! no, if it werena that auld careless body Willie Tamson that brought in his heavy brute o' a boat ower the nets, and had nigh coupit her, forbye driving I kenna how mony stakes out of the shore, and garring us lose a day's kep. The fish are aye maist plentiful when the water's troubled; puir beasts! they haena muckle variety in their life—I'm thinking they'll like a storm for the sake o' change; onyway, they're aye strong when the Firth's champing like an ill-willy horse."

"And are ye doing ought weel, Robbie?" said Mrs Mense.

"No to compleen o'," answered Robbie, "it aye hauds us

gaun. I'm thinking we'll be no that ill this year; the red fish looks weel. See to that grilse; ye'll be needing it for the Laird's dinner the day. Did ye ever see a bonnier beast in the water or out o't?"

After considerable bargaining, the grilse was laid aside together with store of flounders.

"For there's nae saying," said Robbie, "when I may be round again, and it's better to hae a wheen ower mony than ower few—that's philosophy—ye can ask the Laird. I'm thinking to send Peter mair; he's a muckle callant grown, and I see nae occasion I have, to keep a doug, and bark myself; if it wasna that it wad be an awfu' loss to the haill countryside—I dinna ken what ye wad a' do, wanting me."

"Ye've aye a guid word o' yoursel, Robbie Caryl," said Janet.

"There's ne'er a ane kens me as weel, Jen, my woman," retorted the undaunted Robbie; "if it binna the wife; and the wife's gift is mair for finding out folk's faults than their guid qualities; but when I gie ower coming ye'll find it out; see if ye dinna be gieing weary looks ilka market-day for Robbie Caryl and the cuddie."

"We'll wait till that time comes, Robbie," said Mrs Mense; "but, man, hae ye nae mair news than that?"

"Hearken till her noo," said Robbie, reflectively; "hearken till the gate o' thae women—ne'er a thing but news in the heads o' them. Jen, I'm awa'—hae ye ony message to your joe? I'm the canniest man gaun—I ne'er was blackfit at a courtin' yet but it throve; and speaking about marryin'—that's what ye ca' *news*, I'm thinking?—the wives in the town are thrang on the top o' ane e'en now."

"Wha is't Robbie?" asked Janet and her aunt together.

"Oh, I hae gotten till the right thing noo, have I? It's ane that'll ne'er be in this world—it's the minister."

"The minister!" said Mrs Mense, "and what ill will hae ye at the winsome lad, Robbie Caryl, that ye should say he wad never be married?"

"I said nae sic thing; ye tak folk up, neebor, afore they fa'. He may hae half a hunder wives for onything I care, but I'll just tell him ae guid word o' counsel—he needna fash his thoom about this ane."

"And wha is she that's sae grand?" said the old house-keeper, "set her up! does she think the minister's no guid enough for onybody?"

The Reverend Robert was an immense favourite with Mrs Mense. She felt it as an injury to the Church that he should not be able to choose where it pleased him.

"I'm no speaking about grandness—she's nae muckle lady; she's just the mistress o' the schule our wee Mary's at, learning to sew and to behave hersel; but, Mrs Mense, you're auld—ye dinna mind o' the fancies o' young folk. It's you and me, Jen, that can understand how ane whiles likes æ body better than anither—and ye'll gie me the message to your joe?"

Jen made a furious lunge at the bold Robbie with the poker she had in her hand. Her irons were not heating so well as they should have done. Janet was in a bad humour.

"Dear me, Robbie, did ye say it was the schulemistress?" said Mrs Mense with some concern; "nae doubt she's a great friend o' our Miss Lillie's—but the misguided lad! He might have seen how Mr Wright, at Fairholm, made a wreck o' himsel, wi' marryin' Willie Tasker's daughter; but it's nae use speaking—for nothing will learn thae young folk."

"Never you heed, gudewife," said Robbie, "there's nae ill dune. I'll wad ye a' the red fish that comes into the net atween this and Sabbath that she'll no tak' him."

"She'll no tak him—the minister?—she's no blate!"

"Whisht, whisht," said the fisherman, "we needna be misca'ing folk that never did us ony ill. She's as blate as she has ony occasion to be; but there's anither lad in the gate, ye ken—that's it, Jen; ye'll mind by yoursel."

"I wish ye wad haud the claverin tongue o' ye," said the indignant Janet; "*I* ken?—*I* ken nane o' your ill ways—ye needna be putting the name o' them on me; and wha's the ither lad?"

"Do ye think I dinna ken that ye wad never trust me wi' that bit message, if I was telling about anither young lady's sweetheart? Hout, woman, ye're no gaun to get round me wi' the like o' that. I'm a man to be trusted here where I stand; if I wasna, Jen, I wad ne'er hae had the face to ask a woman o' your experience to send your bit message wi' me; but ye may ken it's safe in my hands—never mortal shall hear tell o't but the ane."

The exasperated Janet threatened Robbie with her hot iron; with a broad laugh the fisherman evaded it, but he did not retreat.

"And Miss Buchanan telled ye, Robbie?" said Mrs Mense, "weel she's no ower nice o' her counsellors."

"She's nane sae wise as to tell me," said the incorrigible Robbie, "but I have an e'e in my ain head—no to say twa, and them black anes. Ye see ae black e'e's as guid as three blue anes ony day; for no to speak o' the licht that ilka body can see through, I hae a gift, like the cats, to see in the dark. Na, na, Miss Buchanan has nae thocht I'm in her counsels—but for a' that, I ken; and ye may think when I heard the wives in the toun a' keckling about the minister—I leuch. Some o' them had new found it out, that he was aye wandering about the townend; but he needna fash his thoom—and I've a guid mind to tell him mysel."

"He'll no be muckle heeding," said Mrs Mense with dignity; "the like o' him, a fine-looking lad that might get as guid a leddy as ony in the country-side; and she's no even that you could ca' particular bonnie. Oh! thae young cal-lants, how they will aye rin after their ain fancies!"

The prudential demurrings of the Reverend Robert Inches as to the eligibility of the humble schoolmistress of Fendie were perfectly justified. The parish decided that she was not eligible—that the minister would clearly throw himself away—that the dignity of the Church would be compromised; but the Reverend Robert was now out of his depths, and had lost the footing of prudence. He was not aware that his wanderings about "the townend" began to be discussed by Robbie Carlyle and his customers. The minister was very much more interested at present in consideration of what was said and done in the little, quiet, dusky parlour, than in any other apartment in Fendie, or in broad Scotland. He had lost his balance; he could no longer manage himself according to his old rules, even though the dearly beloved "position" should be put in jeopardy. The chances of his pursuit made him a little anxious sometimes, but there was no withdrawal; he must either win or fail.

CHAPTER IV.

I am sick and capable of fears ;
Oppressed with wrongs and therefore full of fears ;
A widow, husbandless, subject to fears ;
A woman, naturally born to fears.—KING JOHN.

MRS BUCHANAN had a good deal of anxiety about the position and prospects of her daughter. People began to speak of those constant visits of the minister, and now, when it seemed likely that some decision must speedily be come to, Mrs Buchanan began to think remorsefully of the long-tried familiar friend, whose place in their little household Mr Insches seemed so resolute to take. Yet she liked Mr Insches ; she liked him for the simple, natural character which the influence of Helen seemed to draw forth more naturally and simply every day ; she liked him, even for the faults which he could not hide ; and most of all she liked him because he had fallen from his hobby—had lost his depth—and because it was no longer in his power to pretend that he could elevate that lofty head of his, and take his assiduities away. Besides it would be so very suitable ; the modest dignity of his place, equal to the richest yet within the reach of the very poor—its necessary literature and necessary benevolence, which the good mother fancied would suit so well the delicate, impulsive, variable spirit of her only child : all these things increased her desire to see the suit of Mr Insches successful,—and yet—we are inconsistent always, we human folk—the gentle Mrs Buchanan looked wistfully at the address of the Edinburgh newspaper which he sent her constantly, and wondered how William would feel if he saw the new occupant of his long-accustomed corner. She did not like, in her kind inconsistency, to come to any distinct explanation with her daughter ; often she spoke of Mr Insches, and Helen sometimes blushed as she listened ; but the blush now was painful and uneasy. Mrs Buchanan became very anxious—desiring, and yet not desiring that this should come to some definite end.

Helen too felt her position very painful ; night after night the Reverend Robert was there, with his good looks, his good mind, and the little sparks of temper which diversified and

animated them. Week after week passed away, and she saw or heard nowhere but in the newspaper the name of William Oswald. She began to have a disagreeable consciousness that it was possible she might come to like this Reverend Robert, and she began to be a little piqued and angry at his rival for suffering her to remain so long ignorant of all his proceedings and feelings. Helen did not remember then the very decided negative she had put upon his proposal to write; she did not remember anything at that moment, in exculpation of the resolute labourer toiling to the utmost of his stout faculties in the distant city. She only felt impatient, inconsistent, irritable; very much disposed to quarrel with the two candidates for her favour, and still more offended with herself.

In this mood she set out one dull May afternoon immediately after her little crowd had dispersed, to see a small invalid whose place had been vacant among them for more than a week. It was Robbie Carlyle's little daughter, Mary, who had been ill with some childish epidemic, and was now recovering. Helen had been struggling with the most painful mood of her nervous temperament this day—its irritability; she found herself a hundred times on the very point of unnecessary fault-finding—in spite of all her precautions, impatient hasty words had escaped from her lips; and now she was turning her sword against herself, and was in a bitter, painful, unhappy humour, which it was best to carry away out of the society of any whom it might wound, into the still country road, along which she went with the unequal pace, now slow, now hasty, which was usual to her.

The gentle summer air, the dreamy silence just touched and made human with its floating far-away sounds of life, the dim sky above with its soft dark clouds and veiled sun—in these was a charm to which the unquiet spirit never failed to answer. A touch of the kindly humanity which makes the whole world kin, might have lifted her up in a moment into the midst of the sunny clouds of her own bright especial heaven; but when Nature was the physician, the effect was different; the unhappy mood stole away into the deep sadness peculiar to her, and she lingered now and then to look over the fair, dim country with those slanting lines of pale sunshine stealing over it, from the head of yon shrouded mountain in the west, her heart sinking into the depths the while. The cap of which Skiddaw wots when it

is put on, was shading the dark brow of the Scottish hill, and the air was subdued and soft, and the wind sighed about the hedges as though its wings were drenched with rain. Few articulate thoughts were in the downcast mind of Helen; only the thread of linked and varied fancies, which sometimes quivered below the sunbeams like a golden chord, was now sad and drooping like the wind. The unconscious tears gathered in her eyes—the shadow fell heavily over her heart. Slowly along the quiet road she wandered enveloped in the mist of her changed mood. The annoyances and the little angers had vanished away, but she was very sad.

Just then she came in sight of the Firth; between her and its pale glittering waves lay the green breadth of the Marsh, with its fine sea-side grass, and pools of deep still water. Nowhere, far or near, was there grass so smooth and velvet-like, as the close thin-bladed grass of this dangerous play-ground, interdicted to the obedient children of Fendie. But the children of Fendie, like all others, had a craving for interdicted pleasures, and when they got together in bands and could have the countenance of other rebels, the Marsh was a favourite trysting-place; and the bold example of Robbie Caryl's amphibious boys overcame scruples of timidity. It was excellent sport to leap over the gleaming pools of salt water; the strong really enjoyed it, and the weak, precociously compelled by fear of ridicule to do as others did, made pretence of enjoying it too.

Pale, slanting, watery sunbeams were gleaming in the salt pools and on the shrunken Firth, as it began to gather volume, and retrace its rapid steps to the shore. It has strange moods this southern Firth; you see bare, dreary sand-banks at night, dotted with the stake-nets of the fishers, in the very midst of its broad course, where ships will sail bravely when to-morrow's tide is in. The far-away English hills were blotted out with the mist of coming rain, and over the dark hill in the west the sun threw his flickering, sickly beams, longer and longer drawn out, as he faintly glided downward to his bed in the sea.

The Marsh was somewhere about a mile in extent, stretching along the bank of the Firth eastward from the mouth of the Fendie water. For the most part it looked verdant and tempting at a little distance, and was indeed scarcely so much a Marsh as a great extent of fine sea-side grass—what is called links in other places in Scotland—save that this was

a complete net-work of clear salt-water pools, only to be traversed by dint of leaping. As Helen approached its borders a few children were painfully disentangling themselves from its labyrinth. Some of the pools were tolerably deep, and the Fendie children, to increase their dread of the Marsh, had been taught to believe them deeper. The little wanderers on this occasion had been struck with fear as they began to see the tawny waves of the returning Firth roll in on the dark pebbly sand far below. The clouds were gathering close over the sky as though the night was about to fall—some of the small hearts were beating timorously—they were all struggling as they could towards the road.

In the very heart of the Marsh where lay the deepest, broadest pools of all, shutting in the unwary wanderer on every side, Helen saw a little girl lifting in her arms a small, heavy brother, much younger, but not much less than herself. On even ground she could scarcely carry him, but now the young heroine had a desperate attempt to make. The rain had begun, the last lingering sunbeam was gone: all their companions were already out of peril; the poor little sister was essaying to leap over the pool which intercepted her, with the great lumbering boy in her arms.

"Dinna, Jeanie—dinna try't," cried another little girl, looking back; "just bide a wee while. I'll rin and get Robbie Caryl—there's nae fears."

But Jeanie had many fears, and the rain began to come heavily down, and Robbie Caryl's cottage was a full quarter of a mile away; so she made the leap, her frightened heart beating loud. It was successful so far; the little blubbering brother was safely landed, but she herself plunged to the knee into the pool, and her frock was torn, and one of her clogs lost in the tenacious wet sand. Poor Jeanie could not wait to get it out, and every step of her progress must be made at the same peril. She sat down on the sharp grass beside her little brother, and looked at her torn wet frock, and cried bitterly, with visions of high tide, and the dreary darkness, and being drowned, alternating in her mind with terror for what her mother would say about the torn frock and the lost shoe.

But Jeanie must rise and lift little Tammie, and try again; and as she looked wistfully over the dark Marsh, she saw some one taller and more agile than herself, springing step by step over the dangerous pools.

"It's only a woman," said Jeanie to herself, sadly; but immediately the little heart rose and grew courageous: "It's the mistress!"

She had cured Helen. The cheek of the young school-mistress of Fendie was glowing through the rain as if it never could be pale. Peter himself, the embryo fisherman, had never leaped those gleaming pools more bravely than Helen did. It was somewhat hard for an amusement to other than boyhood, but it made her eyes sparkle and her heart beat; she had never been blyther than she was now.

He was a serious weight, that little blubbering Tammie, and was somewhat afraid of the honour of being lifted in the arms of the mistress. It awed him into silence; and Jeanie ventured to pause, to rescue her shoe. The mistress assured her that the pool was not so deep after all, and Jeanie forgot her fears.

It was rather a dreary scene; the rain sweeping down heavier every moment, till against the lowering sky it began to look white, carried on the wind, like long, trailing skirts of some stiff silken garment; a little below, the tawny roaring Firth, making way sullen and strong over his shores, and lashing up on the shingle in long curls of foam, like a lion's mane; and here the raindrops pattering in the ghostly pools, and the little girl at Helen's feet forcing on the recovered shoe, and restraining her weeping in hysteric sobs, while Helen herself grasped the waist of the heavy Tammie with both her hands, and gathered up her dress for the laborious progress to the road.

A passer-by who came in sight on an ascending road at some distance hurried forward in fear for them when he looked down. There was no need: as he reached the edge of the Marsh, Helen cleared the last pool. Her dress was thoroughly wet; she had made one or two stumbles, but her rapid movements seemed more graceful, and her face was brighter, the banker Oswald thought, than when he saw her last in the drawing-room of the Manse; for Mr Oswald was the passer-by—and in the heavy rain and gathering darkness, with only the children to prevent their being alone, he was standing face to face with Helen Buchanan.

The little Tammie was rather a pretty child, and considering how his careful sister and he had spent the afternoon, was a very tolerably clean one; for the pools were very clear, and neither dust nor mud were on the Marsh; so as Helen

set him on the ground, and bent down to help and console Jeanie, who had painfully followed her, they made by no means an ungraceful group—if we except the stout, perplexed elderly gentleman with the umbrella, who, not much less shy than Helen, stood with confused hesitation looking at them, and not knowing what to say.

A nervous tremor had come upon the young school-mistress; half of it was physical, and proceeded from the unusual exertion she had made, and half of it owned her consciousness of the presence of William Oswald's father. It was natural to her; the fingers which rested on little Jeanie's shoulder trembled a good deal, and Helen's attitude and glowing face were shy—a shyness which was at the same time frank, and an awkwardness by no means ungraceful. The banker meanwhile stood before her and her little *protégés*, and held his umbrella over his own head, and grew slightly red in the face. But there was no remnant of gracefulness in the embarrassment of the respectable Mr Oswald. The good man felt a little afraid of the shy, unquiet girl, wondered rather what she would say to him, and felt very much at a loss for something to say to her.

There were sounds of loud, boyish footsteps on the road, as Helen, stooping down, wrapped up the children as she best could to defend them from the rain.

"Eh!" exclaimed a voice corresponding to the feet, as Hector Maxwell of Firthside and his brother came up out of breath; "it's Miss Buchanan—I knew it was Miss Buchanan—and she's droukit. Here's my plaid—take my plaid, Miss Buchanan! We've run a' the road from the brae, because we saw you on the Marsh, and if you had just waited—"

Hector looked indignantly at the little heavy Tammie, and in great haste threw off his plaid.

"Miss Buchanan will not be much better with your plaid, Hector," said Mr Oswald; "she must take my umbrella; it will be more serviceable, and not so heavy."

Helen answered the somewhat constrained politeness with a little bow.

"Thank you, Hector; but you would be very wet before you got home, if I took your plaid from you."

"But I'm no heeding," said the generous Maxwell. Hector did not need to brush up his English for Helen; she was not so easily shocked as his sister.

"And I shall soon be home," said Helen. "I must go

with these children, you know, and see that they are not scolded; and I am wet already. Come, Tammie. Hector, good-night."

Helen looked up into the banker's face, and her natural frankness struggled for a moment with her shy pride. She was almost inclined to say that she would share his umbrella if he pleased, and the next moment she thought she would say nothing; but finally there was a compromise.

"Good-night, Mr Oswald," said Helen, as she took little Tammie's hand.

"We are going the same way," said the embarrassed banker; and so they did; and amicably under shelter of one umbrella, with little Jeanie and her brother getting very muddy and wet at their feet, the banker Oswald and Helen Buchanan walked side by side towards the cheerful lights of Fendie.

Mr Oswald cleared his throat; he rather wanted to begin a conversation, but he did not very well know how. If this young lady was to be Mrs Insches, the good man said to himself plausibly, it was very necessary that he should at least be acquainted with her; but certain it is that with no other prospective Mrs Insches would Mr Oswald have felt himself so uncomfortably conscious. He made a beginning at last on the easiest subject.

"How foolish people are to permit their children to stray out on that Marsh!"

"It is the fault of the bairns themselves," said Helen.

The banker remembered that Miss Swinton, Hope's oracle, applauded our natural Scottish tongue, and it was rather a pretty word, "bairns." In another person he would have thought it vulgar, perhaps, but no one could call that low voice, with its changeful modulations, vulgar, and he began to like listening to it.

"Jeanie is afraid her mother will be angry; but when she sees them so wet, she will forget their misdemeanour, I hope."

Little Tammie had been tied up as well as it was possible to keep him comfortable, but the poor little fellow was very wet notwithstanding, and was getting weary and sleepy as he trudged along the road. Helen had insinuated him between the banker and herself, and so he was protected by the wonderful umbrella, and moreover had his thumb to suck consolation from, which melancholy pleasure the hapless

Jeanie, walking on Helen's other side, and laboriously gathering up her torn, wet frock, and thinking of what her mother would say, was quite deprived of.

"You seem fond of children, Miss Buchanan," said the formal banker, after a considerable pause.

Helen began to forget the speciality of the case, in that this perplexed man was William Oswald's father. She did not like, so sensitive and easily moved as she was herself, to see any one ill at ease beside her.

"I like them," she said, frankly, "perhaps it is because I spend so much of my time among them; but I like their company."

"And does it never weary you?" said the curious Mr Oswald.

Helen paused a moment—a sort of half-remembrance of the mood in which she left the school-room that day just floating like a cloud over the spirit which had shaken out its wings and was up again, singing in mid-heaven.

"We all weary sometimes," she said; "but I not more, I think, than others. It is pleasant to work, and my own work, I fancy, is pleasanter to me than any other would be."

Mr Oswald was a good deal astonished; he did not quite know how to answer so honest a statement, for the good man had taken it for granted that the young schoolmistress must be very sick of her labour, and eager to escape from it, which indeed she was not, except sometimes, when her wayward moods were upon her.

"I did not know that you knew Hector Maxwell," said Mr Oswald, awkwardly; "do you admit those rude boys to your liking as well as the little girls, Miss Buchanan?"

"Hector Maxwell is not rude," said Helen. "He is a genuine boy, and a great friend of mine. Yes, indeed; I like them all very well, until they become young gentlemen and young ladies."

"And what then?" said the banker.

"And then I become a little afraid of them, and they do not suit me any longer," said Helen, smiling, as she paused at an open door, where the mother of Jeanie was looking out anxiously for her little truants. "I thank you, Mr Oswald; good-night."

CHAPTER V.

Is she not proud? doth she not count her blessed,
Unworthy as she is, that we have wrought
So worthy a gentleman to be her bridegroom?

ROMEO AND JULIET.

THE little roundabout Miss Insches began to grow disturbed about the length of her own continuance in office. She saw that very soon her dominion over the dining-room and the drawing-room, and her share of the comforts of the library, must come to a close; and while the good-humoured sister anticipated, with considerable relief, her return to the plebeian, unpretending home where there was no necessity for being always genteel, she felt also a good many qualms about resigning Robert, and Robert's beautiful chairs and tables, into the keeping of a stranger.

"For ye see, Miss Buchanan, she's young," said Miss Insches to herself, not daring to have any other confidante, "and for a' she's nae better—I'm meaning for a' she's a hantle puirer than oursels, no to speak of Robert—she has gey high notions like himsel'; and I'm very doubtful that she'll just let Nelly dust the big room, and no think of putting to her ain hand. Robert says I should do that too, but he's a young lad for a' he's the minister, and doesna ken a' thing. I wish she may just be mindful o' himsel'. He's aye been used wi' his ain way, puir man, and has been muckle made o', and muckle thought o'; and I'm sure a better lad—"

Miss Insches paused with an incipient tear in her eye. The worshipped minister son, of whom the mother at home was so proud—the omnipotent brother whose slightest word was law—alas! was he to cease to be an idol—to come down from his absolute throne, and be limited to a constitutional monarchy like any other man, with perhaps a young, proud wife exacting service from him, instead of rendering the devoted homage which was Robert's due? Miss Insches's eye again wandered over the shining tables of the sacred drawing-room, and her heart was troubled.

"He's aye had his ain way, puir man!" she repeated, mournfully, as she carefully closed the door and sighed. Poor

Robert! he was to be married, as all Fendie said—he was to have his own way no longer.

The Reverend Robert was seated at his writing table in the library; it was a study day. Miss Insches stole noiselessly in, closed the door, and took her seat at the window, with her seam in her hand. Robert was writing his sermon; the good sister sewed those new shirts of his in devout silence; when her thread fell she picked it up with a look of guilt—she might have disturbed Robert. Foolish Robert! the young wife would not reverence his stillness so.

“Janet,” said Robert, graciously, “we are to dine at Kirkmay on Monday. I have just had a note from Mrs Whyte.”

“Ye dinna mean me, too, Robert?” said Miss Insches.

“Certainly I mean you too, Janet,” said the young man, with some impatience. “Why, you have been at Kirkmay before.”

“Yes, Robert, I’m meaning that,” responded the dutiful sister humbly, “but it’s the Monday of the preachings, is’t no? and will there be more folk than ministers?”

“Mrs Whyte is to have a few friends,” said the Reverend Robert, with a conscious smile, “and there is no reason why they should only be ministers.”

“I didna say there was,” said Miss Insches; “is onybody we ken to be there, Robert?”

Robert smiled again. His sister had come to understand the particular meaning of this smile.

“I fancy Miss Maxwell of Mossgray will be there,” he said with a blush as he returned to his sermon.

Miss Insches applied herself to her shirt with another little suppressed sigh. She understood very well what was meant by Miss Maxwell of Mossgray; and Miss Insches by no means disliked Helen; but the great question whether she would be sufficiently careful of Robert when advanced to the dignity of Robert’s wife was hard and difficult to solve. Miss Insches shook her head as she went on with her work. On Monday—the crisis might come on Monday.

Monday when it came was bright with the sunshine, and fragrant with all the sweet sounds and odours of May. On the preceding day had been the half-yearly Occasion, the Communion Sabbath of Kirkmay, and the Monday’s services were of thanksgiving, according to the reverent usage of Scotland. Mr Wright of Fairholm was the officiating minis-

ter, and preached a chaotic ponderous sermon, which, according to the judgment of the Kirkmay elders, had "guid bits in it; very guid bits; but was naething like the minister's." The minister was very much beloved in his parish; they rather prided themselves, these simple people, on their possession of a man who wrote books, even though the books were but sixpenny ones; and read his small biographies with proud regard. The one gentle weakness of his fine character came out as an excellence in their eyes, and there were few in Kirkmay who did not boast of "the minister."

After dinner, while the gentlemen were still downstairs, Mrs Whyte, with her lady guests, pleasantly occupied the comfortable plain drawing-room, which, though it was by no means so fine, did yet, Miss Insches could not fail to perceive, look a very much more habitable place than the corresponding room in the Manse of Fendie. Mr Whyte dabbled a little in all the gentler sciences—the flowers which his wife cultivated, because she cultivated everything beautiful which was within her reach, the good minister classified, and talked of with gentle erudition; and specimens of fine seaweed, and delicate mosses, and fossils not very rare, and shells picked up on the margin of the Firth, evinced his universal liking, and his only rudimentary knowledge of the kindred philosophies of nature. He was not very learned in these various departments; he only marvelled over the wondrous mechanism of everything which came from his Master's hand, and cherished them all tenderly for their Maker's sake.

The ladies—Mrs Gray, Lilius, and Helen were the only *lay* persons present—were very comfortably gathered into groups in the drawing-room discussing the notable things of their own district: the church, their several families. The small company was by no means dull, especially as Mrs Whyte's children, the little boy and girl about whom their frank mother had said there could not be two opinions, were, with all their might, entertaining the guests.

The room was rather an oddly shaped room; it had a curiously angled corner, with a window in it, which Mrs Whyte chose as her summer seat, and playfully called her boudoir. The work-table which stood in it was scarcely clear of its ordinary lumber even now; there were traces that the minister's wife had been sitting there this morning, singing over her household work the low-voiced songs of a pure mind, happily at ease. Lilius Maxwell had strayed alone into Mrs

Whyte's chair by the window. She was very pale, and as she looked out upon the verdant country, and the Firth and the hills far away, her fingers came slowly towards each other, and were painfully clasped as was their wont. It was drawing near again—that day which might change the current of her life.

As she sat there, Helen Buchanan approached quietly; the pale, sad, absorbed face touched her to the heart.

"You are very sad, Lillas," said Helen, as she stood screening her friend from the other occupants of the room, "but you will not tell me why; will you let me say anything—do anything for you?"

"Yes, Helen." Lillas rested her head silently upon her companion's shoulder, and closed her eyes. It was a relief to her; her heart was sick—she could not speak of it, but here in silent confidence she could lean for a moment the weight of her trouble. "I have heard nothing; I have had no word this long, long, weary time—and the day is coming near again. To-morrow—after to-morrow will be the day."

There was nothing more said, for the sickness rose up blank over the heart of Lillas, and the tears were in Helen's eyes; but the drooping head of the Lily of Mossgray, overcharged with heavy rain, leaned on the friend's breast, and was comforted. She remembered the moment long after, and so did Helen. More than many words—more than much bemoaning together of a sorrow more openly confessed, did that silent confidence bind them together.

The conversation going on in the room was not in the least abstract; local and individual were all the subjects under discussion, and the talk about them might have been called gossip. It certainly was of the genus if not of the species to which that unpopular name is given. In a "countryside," and above all in a little town, metropolis of a country-side, where each family has a certain connection with all, conversation, unless galvanically kept up in the region of books, must glide into this channel; and the clerical character which this little company of ladies possessed, as strongly marked as their husbands below, increased the necessity. Having satisfactorily dismissed the children of the respective Manse, and ascertained who had had hooping cough, and which it was who had come so easily through the measles, the respective parish over which she presided was the next grand object before the mind of the clerical lady.

Its successes, its adversities, its sins, its great people and its small; and each parish lady was interested in her neighbour's dominions.

Now it happened that this chapter of backslidings was a peculiarly sad and melancholy one; revealing under the healthful rural air and sweet fresh sunshine, a moral atmosphere, dense, unwholesome, and heavy. While one listened to what those lamenting people said, one's arcadian visions of rural purity sorrowfully vanished. Follies of youth, the world said; alas! not follies, but sins, dark, far-spreading, unregarded; and public opinion had even ceased in the peasant class to brand them with the unutterable disgrace which is their fate in others. Young, fresh girls heard of those vices—heard them lightly spoken of by older lips grown callous—and saw the sinner scarcely disgraced at all; it was a great evil, shadowing the souls of many as with a low, spreading, deadly tree, between them and the sun.

"Could nothing be done," whispered Helen in Mrs Whyte's ear, as, trembling with bitter shame and pain, she had listened to some story of the fallen, "you who have influence; who may dare interfere in such matters; could the air not be purified in some way—could nothing be done?"

"My dear," said Mrs Gray, "it is nothing but our evil nature; we cannot mend it; what can we do?"

"We cannot mend it," said Helen in her low, vehement voice; "but we can strive, endeavour, fight—do anything, anything to change such a state of things. It is our work in the world; the other things are only by the way; this is our work—what we were born for. To pull away all obstructions, to let in, everywhere, the light of heaven. If we once did that, this evil could not be—surely it could not be."

"I think so, Helen," said the kind Mrs Whyte; "we, in our position, might do much more than we are doing; but at least, we all lament these evils bitterly—you believe that?"

Helen did not answer; she wanted that experience of the maturer mind which could discriminate between an exceptional and an ordinary case, and refrain from sweeping judgments. The shock of pain with which she heard of evil was always with her, a spur to endeavour something against it; but while others lacked will, she lacked power. She could not cast herself into the crusading ranks and assail the powers of darkness as she thirsted to do; but the impulse of warfare was strong upon her—she could not rest.

"Ah, my dear," said Mrs Gray, "you do not know yet as you will know the misery of this wicked world, and how vain it is striving with it; every day I live I see it more and more."

"Yet it is to be pure," said Helen, with her head erect and her eye kindling, "it is to be filled with the knowledge of Him—it is to be made fit for His reign. I do not know—no one living may see that day—but I think sometimes that if we believed that, we could have no doubt, no fear. We should look to the great hope which lies upon the world like sunshine, and not to the misery which it earns every day. It is to be pure—God is pledged to us that it shall be so; but our arms rust, and we use them not—our days pass and we do nothing; yet *we* are to labour for it—it is so ordained—and it is to be pure!"

Helen's eyes suddenly fell, her head drooped. The gentlemen, some of them, had already strayed upstairs, and close beside her stood the Reverend Robert listening with ostentatious attention.

"Yes," said the somewhat rough voice of Mr Wright of Fairholm; "a minister's life is a very hard life, Miss Buchanan; we have to labour as you say; the very Sabbath, which is a resting day to everybody else, is a hard-working day to a minister."

Helen turned rapidly away; it was a strange anticlimax.

"Miss Buchanan did not mean that," said Mrs Whyte. "Miss Buchanan likes the good, wholesome work. She thinks we do too little, instead of too much, Mr Wright."

"No doubt, no doubt," said the cumbrous, heavy man, "there is a great deal of truth in that. The people ought to know their own duty, and not leave the work entirely to us as they do; and the elders really need stirring up; but a minister—few people know how much is laid on the shoulders of a minister."

"And you, Mr Insches?" asked Mrs Whyte, smiling, as her quick eye glanced over the great, stooping, uncouth figure of the strong man beside her in whom was no impulse to work, and who actually felt fatigue more easily than would the nervous delicate girl.

Mr Insches hesitated; it was not his policy to differ with Helen; but he had not received the inspiration much more than his sluggish brother. He was still, to a considerable

extent, a matter-of-course man, doing what he must do, and not very much more.

"The ministerial life," said the Reverend Robert, with some dignity, "is a life of great exertion. We are never perfect of course, but it is a most laborious life, the life of a conscientious minister."

It was a compromise—it pleased nobody. Helen turned away, unconsciously disappointed. She had expected something better.

"'Deed, Robert," said Miss Insches, "I'm aye feared the ither way about you. It's my terror, Mrs Whyte, that he'll just wear himsel out, and I'm sure if he was to get a wife and I kent beforehand wha she was to be, I would warn her no to put such nonsense notions into his head; for ye see, Miss Buchanan—Eh! Robert, is there onything ails ye?—are ye no weel?"

But Robert was not "no weel"—he was only frowning upon his too-honest sister, and making an elaborate face. It was too late; all the eyes in the room were turned to the blushing, angry countenance of the Reverend Robert, and he heard tittering in the corners. He turned away full of wrath—it would not do; there was no putting the restraints of delicacy or prudence over the simplicity of Janet.

CHAPTER VI.

"You are altogether governed by humours."—KING HENRY IV.

THE crisis did come, though not as Miss Insches anticipated. Helen carefully guarded herself, as they returned home, from the society of the Reverend Robert, and managed that the opportunity he sought should not be afforded to him. She was thoughtful and grave that night, Mrs Buchanan perceived; for the shadow of a selfish pride had darkened for the time the firmament of Helen. The banker showed no sign of courtesy or kindness; the banker's wife, on the rare occasions when she met her, never mentioned William's name. William himself, busy in the distant city, seemed to have given up the contest; to have forgotten the romance of his

youth ; to have left Helen as he had left Fendie, because she was too humble and too quiet. She did not care—she would not care ! she protested to herself, with a proud flush on her cheek, and proud tears in her eyes, that it was nothing to her ; but involuntarily an evil, angry feeling had sprung up in her mind—she could avenge herself !

A week ago she had felt painfully that it was just possible that even she might be inconstant—that the Reverend Robert might some time glide into William's place. She felt now that this was impossible ; that her own rapid pace could never harmonize with that slightly ostentatious dignity of the Reverend Robert's ; that her impetuous mind must be chafed and irritated beyond measure, if it ever were yoke-fellow with his ; yet the very discovery goaded her to go blindly on. In the bitterness of her pride she thought she could not reject the only man who thought her good enough to be his equal ; and when she remembered how long a time it took before even he ceased to be ashamed of his incipient tenderness for the poor schoolmistress, the bitterness increased until it flooded her very heart. There was a gloom upon the world ; the evil and misery over which she had spread the golden tissue of young hope began to appear darkly exaggerated to the opposite extreme. Those whom she would have remembered for ever, forgot her, and those who made her their choice, were ashamed of the power which compelled them so to do. Her deep melancholy fell upon Helen, as it had never fallen before ; the coming of a new day did not dispel it. It was such a sorrow as she could not tell, and so she bore it proudly, bitterly, and in silence.

At the mid-day interval the watchful Mrs Buchanan prevailed on her daughter to go out, to do some simple errands in the town. She generally managed all these matters herself ; but the good mother was a skilled physician, and knew how something, trivial enough in itself, might clear the atmosphere in a moment and bring out the sunshine. Mrs Buchanan too was anxious and uneasy : when it seemed now sure that the Reverend Robert must succeed, she thought remorsefully of William, the son of her own training, to whom her house had been so long a second home. She remembered the confidence that there had been between them, and how old ties would have been made stronger and tenderer, had it been he who was the new son ; and then she began to feel that Mr Insches, with all his good qualities, was

a stranger ; that he would introduce a new intruding element—that her sole child would be no more her own.

So the mother sent Helen forth with quiet sighs, and Helen went about her errand sadly, the gloom in her heart obscuring the gentle skies of May.

She walked slowly as her manner was in her times of depression, taking in the common sights and sounds around her into the mist in her own heart, where they remained to bring back in other moods remembrances of that dark hour. She had executed all her mother's commissions, and concluded her business by a visit to Maxwell Dickson's low dark shop, on her way home. She got such literature as he had from the librarian of Fendie, and it served now and then to enliven the long solitary evenings—the evenings which were not sufficiently solitary now.

On Maxwell Dickson's counter lay an unbound book, very clean and very new. Helen took it up as she put the volumes which she brought with her into the librarian's dingy hands. It was still damp from the press ; no one had opened it before. The subject attracted her ; it was one of the publications of the New Crusade.

The social science—how to make men better, nobler, purer : how to attack in their own camp the declared evils of our land and time—was the subject of this book ; the science of that great discontent which has seized upon so many able minds, happily, now—the science of aggression against all vileness, all pollution. This was the subject of the book, and the name of it kindled a little the dim light in the eyes of Helen. She turned it over rapidly to glean what she could of its contents.

Maxwell Dickson in vain tries to make his young customer hear what he is saying to her. A sudden flush has covered her face—a sudden thrill springs up through the bounding pulses which were so languid a moment before ; the slight nervous start—the head lifted so swiftly—the motion of the eager fingers which hold these pages open. From some unseen hand the electric touch is given : what is the cause ? Helen is reading in the new book.

“The writer remembers well the arguments urged upon him once with the enthusiastic faith of youth, by one who desired a new order of chivalry vowed and dedicated to the service of God and the poor. ‘It is not well—surely it is not well to withdraw from the evils which are in us and

around us. I say we are bound to do battle with them—not to stand on our defence alone, but to carry the war into the camp of the enemies. I think sometimes that the state of war must be the only good state for those who have sin natural to them as we have, and that if these words, resist and struggle, were withdrawn from our language we would be no longer human; for when we let our arms fall, our hearts fall, and weariness comes upon us, and distrust and gloom; and out of the living world we come into the narrow chamber of ourselves, and the sun sets upon us—’ It is the philosophy of a young heart; of one who has not yet travelled far from the East, and whom the vision splendid still attends upon the way; but because it is youthful and has the breath of enthusiasm in it, it is no less true.”

Maxwell Dixon is impatient; he pulls Miss Buchanan’s sleeve, and with that thrill of nervous strength upon her she is compelled to withdraw those new damp pages from their office of shading her flushed cheek and moving features; but Helen is not angry; she lifts her eyes, which dazzle him with their unusual brightness, to the honest man’s stolid face. He does not know what to make of this variable visitor of his; he thinks she looked very different when she entered the shop, but he fancies it must just be one of the whims of “thae women.”

“I’m saying,” said Maxwell Dixon, “that the new books have come noo, for this month, Miss Buchanan. This is the twalt—I got Blackwood and the rest o’ them the day—and the minister’s got Blackwood; but ye may hae your pick o’ the rest.”

The rest were not very tempting; edifying serials, cheap travesties of the Copperfields and Pendennises of the time; the adventures of London “gents,” who had not any compensating good quality to make amends for the miserable life which they recorded; vile books with which, because they are cheap, the libraries of country towns infest the minds of the young, and impress the “gent” character upon the young men who patronise them. Helen did not look at the books. It was a clumsy feint of the pawkie Maxwell; he thought she would forgive him the breach of his promise to keep the one especial Blackwood for her, when she heard it was given to the minister.

But Helen had no thought of Blackwood, nor even of the minister; he had left her mind as the cloud left it. In

her happy tremor she forgot the Reverend Robert. She thought only of this in her hand, this messenger of the true heart which she had so vainly doubted.

"Ay," said the librarian, "that's a new thing; a gentleman brocht it in here, that's come frae Edinburgh this morning. I dinna ken what it's aboot mysel', but he said it was grand, and something aboot a Fendie man that wrote it. I didna tak particular notice, but—Maggie, didna yon gentleman say that it was a Fendie man that made the new book on the counter?"

"Ay, faither," said the more polite Maggie, Maxwell's buxom daughter. "He said it was a Fendie young gentleman; but he wadna tell us wha."

"And you do not know?" said Helen, with her wavering blush and smile.

"Na," said the stolid Maxwell, "except it be, maybe, Dr Elliot's son, that's at the college learning to be a doctor, or Maister Nicol Shaw, the writer, or the minister, or—I'm sure I dinna ken. It's no in the library, Miss Buchanan, and it's no my ain either, or ye might get a reading o't, if ye wad promise no' to cut up the leaves, and to keep it out o' the gate o' the bairns; but it's no' my ain. I durstna even sell't if I had a customer."

And Helen durst not buy it, even if it had been Maxwell's own; but she stood and looked at it with longing eyes. She remembered her own words so well; she remembered the winter night when William in his corner by the fireside announced to her his going to Edinburgh, his entrance on the man's work, of which so often in her eager, ambitious mind she had dreamed; and he too remembered it. The romance of the old times will never die. She had belted on his spurs and his sword in yonder quiet evening, and now the lady's colour was on the lance of the true knight!

And Helen returned along the main street, her heart within her singing like a bird, and the heavens and the earth bright with a sunshine more radiant than the smiles of May. He was a wise man, that grave resolute William; if his blow were long of coming, it was a mighty blow when it came, and cast down all defences. The hopes of the Reverend Robert perished as incautious buds perish in a night's frost. He was forgotten.

Mrs Buchanan in the little parlour heard the light, quick step without, and knew by its pace that the gloom was

gone; but she also was occupied within, and somewhat puzzled, was turning over the damp, uncut pages of a new book too.

"I do not know what this is, Helen," said Mrs Buchanan, as her daughter entered the room, "but I suppose William thought it would please you. It came by the coach, my dear, and it is directed in William's hand."

Helen sat down by the table to look at that especial passage again. Her heart was full; she wanted to say something, but could not say it, her shyness veiling the new joy, as well as the emotions of so frank a face could be veiled; but that was not saying much. At last she rose and laid the book before her mother, and stood half behind her leaning upon her shoulder.

"Mother, William would be right if he thought this would please me almost better than anything else in the world—it is William's own."

Mrs Buchanan took her daughter's hands and looked into her face. The head drooped, the eyes were cast down. Helen could not meet the scrutinizing glance; but they understood each other, and in the misty, tremulous period which followed, the heart of the good mother lightened too. She dismissed the Reverend Robert with a gentle sigh, and she received again the old friend, the son William, feeling sure now that there could be no competitor for the place he had held so long.

When her scholars were finally dismissed that day—and Mrs Buchanan heard Helen's voice singing snatches of old songs before the last little one had made her farewell curtsy at the school-room door—Helen took her book in her hand and went away over the bridge and through the long, waving grass to the Waterside. She chose one little dell, her favourite spot, where the trees, closely circling it round, left one green, swelling bank, upon the brink of the water, on which the sunshine fell through a network of boughs and leaves. On the opposite side of the river, within sight of her resting-place, burns were running down like so many choristers into the broad stream, and in the middle of the strong brown current eddies played fantastically, and by the bank branches of long willows swept the tide, and the dark alder and the delicate ash leaned over, glassing their foliage in its waves. And there the young dreamer sat absorbed, lingering over the kindred thoughts which kept pace so truly to the music

of her own, and starting now and then as the rapid fancies poured upon her like a flood, and she shaped the future in that fairy loom—a future not such as common dreamers choose. Noble labour, keeping time to the great universal harmonies which God has planted in his world—work such as befits His followers, who for men became a man.

She seemed to hear the grand and noble chimes with which all nature accompanies the work of those who seek to speed the coming of His kingdom. The light of common day was radiant to her with the sunshine of promise; it should yet shine upon a purer world, a country ransomed by its King; and she forgot the pain, and difficulty, and miseries that intervened for joy of the certain end.

But amid the dreamings of Helen, there came the interrupting sound of a hurried, bounding footstep, and almost before she could look up to see who the intruder was, Hope Oswald plunged down upon her, out of breath. Hope had arrived in Fendie only that morning, and had been seeking Helen at home. She was overjoyed to find her here.

"I saw you reading a book," exclaimed Hope, when the first greeting was over. "I am quite sure you were reading a book—Helen, may I not see it? Why did you put it away?"

"It is a grave book, Hope, not such as you would like," said Helen, looking as she felt, embarrassed and conscious.

"But I like grave books—sometimes," said Hope. "I am fifteen—I am not a girl now, Helen; but do you mind what Tibbie said, last Hallowe'en? You were to get your fortune out of a book. Oh, Helen, will you tell me? Have you ever got your fortune yet?"

Helen fairly turned her burning cheek away, with a nervous start. So it was fulfilled, the simple prophecy of Tibbie; the hour and the book had come, and this was "the fortune" of Helen. She did not make any answer. She held her precious volume under her shawl and looked over the wan water, away into the vacant air, with her changeful smile.

"I think I know," said the sagacious Hope.

"What do you know, Hope?" said Helen.

But Hope was perverse.

"Helen, Miss Swinton is coming, but only for a day, and little Mary Wood is to stay all the vacation. Miss Swinton wants to see you, Helen, and she said she would take you to Edinburgh; but I think you should not go, Helen."

"Why?"

Hope paused, and as she could think of no satisfactory answer, went on, on another course.

"Helen, William is perhaps coming home—only for awhile; you don't know how much William has to do now; and, Helen, people say he is clever. Do you think he is?"

There was some pleasant moisture subduing the unusual brightness of Helen's eyes. Her voice was lower than usual too, and the sensible Hope observed keenly.

"No, Hope," said Helen, with some tremor. "I think he is not clever. I think—"

"I don't care for that," said Hope, bravely. "Are you going home, Helen? Will you let me go too? It is only other people who call him clever, you know, Helen; but he is *our* William."

CHAPTER VII.

"Warena my heart licht, I wad die."—GRIZZEL BAILLIE.

At the same bright hour of noon as that on which Helen set out so sadly, commissioned with her mother's domestic errands, Lillias Maxwell sat in the sunshine upon the mossy steps of the old sun-dial in the garden of Mossgray. She had her work in her hand as usual, and was sewing listlessly, with long intervals of idleness. It was an occupation very ill-suited for her at that time, for there was nothing in it to deliver her from the sway of her own thoughts; and so she pursued the quiet work and the long trains of musing together, looking, as she always did, very pale and very sad. To-morrow—to-morrow was the day.

The "soul of happy sound" surrounded her on every side, and she was faintly conscious of it; the drowsy stir of summer life, the hum of passing bees, the ripple of the water as it went on its way, plaintively, beyond the willows, softened by the warm medium of that sunny air through which they came, fell gently on her ear—perhaps they soothed her un-awares; but we feel the solemn weight of our humanity more heavily when the heart of Nature throbs beside us in its spring joy, conscious of an inner world, whose revolutions

and vicissitudes are of greater import to ourselves than all the happy changes of the earth.

But as the old man looked out from the projecting turret-window, it pleased him to see where she was, and how she was employed—for Liliās was singing, and the sunshine stealing through the trees rested on her head. He could not catch the words, and scarcely the music of her song, but the gentle human voice mingled with the familiar cadence of the river, and the young head drooped in graceful meditation beneath the joyous skies of noon. He thought the cloud was beginning to break and disappear; he fancied that the youthful life was asserting its native elasticity, and he turned in to his books with his benign smile.

But it was not so. She was singing indeed, but her voice was so low that it scarcely ever rose above the murmuring tone of the accompanying water; and she had chosen fit words to express the caprice of a sick heart. It was the brave Grizzel Baillie's pathetic ballad, "Werena my heart licht, I wad-dee"—most sad of all the utterances of endurance. Liliās had never known before that sick and flickering lightness of the strained heart.

Her hands fell listlessly upon her lap; her head drooped forward—so pale it was and troubled—into the golden air; her mind was away, wandering painfully through all the bitter hypotheses of care and anxious sorrow, and the slow notes stole murmuring over her lip, the unconscious plaint of her weariness. Who has not felt that contradiction? who does not know the strength and life of pain, and how it buoys up the feeble almost as hope does?"—"Werena my heart licht, I wad dee."

As she sat thus, Halbert entered the grounds of Mossgray, and perceiving Liliās, advanced to her with some hesitation. He seemed to be doubtful whether he should speak to her or no, and gave a wavering glance up to the turret-window of Mossgray's study as he passed. But Mossgray was seated in the dusk of the large apartment, with content upon his face—content for both the children of his old age, and good hope that the cloud of Liliās' firmament was floating away. The young man went on with a slow, reluctant step to the sun-dial: she had not noticed him, and unseen he listened to the pathetic burden of her song.

"Werena my heart licht, I wad dee." Halbert had never heard the words before, and they struck him strangely.

Lilias started as she heard his step; she had fallen into strange habits of late—customs not common to the calm and thoughtful composure of her nature. Such fancies as the poet's Margaret had, as she sat by her solitary door, while her eyes

“Were busy in the distance, shaping things
That made her heart beat quick.”

It startled her very much, this sudden footstep. She turned her head with a sharp, quick flush of pain, and then it drooped again so languidly.

“Is it you, Halbert?”

“Lilias,” said Halbert, with a difficult attempt at cheerfulness, “it is very rare to hear you sing, and that strange song. Where does it come from?”

“Do you think it strange?” said Lilias. “I think it is not strange, but only very sad and true. Grizzel Baillie must have had a sick heart sometimes, and it sang to her so.”

But the stalwart, healthful Halbert had never been sick at heart.

“I do not understand it very well,” he said, frankly; “but where did you get it, Lilias?”

“My mother had a maid called Barbara,” said Lilias, with her faint smile, “and, like Desdemona's, she carried this old, plaintive music about with her. She did not die singing it; but I think, in her homely fashion, she knew its meaning well. I had it from her. But, Halbert, you are not well—something has troubled you!”

“No, Lilias.” He was looking very pitifully at the pale, calm face now raised to his.

“What is it then? There is no evil news from the North?”

“No, Lilias,” repeated Halbert, “nothing has happened to distress me; but—I wish you would tell me why you are so pale. Have you any friend ill? are you afraid of—”

Lilias had risen from her low seat in eager haste; her fingers were clasped together; the feverish hectic of anxiety was burning on her cheek.

“What is it?—tell me.”

“I do not know,” faltered Halbert, looking at her humbly, as if he had done wrong; “perhaps it is nothing—but I got a letter for you in Fendie, Lilias.”

She could not speak; her lips were dry and would not come together; but she held out her hand with a gesture of angry, commanding impatience, such as never mortal saw before in Lilius Maxwell.

And he placed the letter in the trembling outstretched hand—the ominous, mournful letter, with its border and seal of mourning. He saw her eye fall on the strange handwriting of the address; he heard the low groan with which the heart breaks; and then she turned away.

She turned away, groping in the noon sunshine like one blind; and Halbert stood in reverent pity, watching the tottering, rapid steps which went sheer forward to the door of the house, leaving footprints among the flowers, and breaking down the snowy, drooping head of one of the cherished lilies of Mossgray. Like it, Lilius was crushed to the ground. The honest heart of Halbert melted as he sat down on the steps of the sun-dial. Man as he was, he could have wept for her; the shadow of sympathetic grief came over him, and Halbert sat still and mused while the shadows lengthened on the dial at his head, thinking as he had never thought before.

“What has become of Lilius, Halbert?” said Mossgray.

The young man started; his own face was very grave and melancholy, but the smile of good pleasure with which he had looked upon Lilius from his turret-window was still upon the lip of Adam Graeme.

“Lilius has gone in,” said Halbert, hurriedly—“Lilius is ill—I mean something has happened, Mossgray.”

“What has happened, Halbert?” Mossgray was still smiling.

“I cannot tell—she has lost some friend. I brought a letter, an Indian letter to her, from the town:—the seal was black—it seemed to carry news of a death.”

The face of Mossgray changed.

“My poor child!—my poor Lilius! Halbert, I trust, I hope you are wrong; but if you are not—”

The old man covered his face with his hand as he turned away. He remembered what it was to be made desolate.

The long, bright hours stole on, but no one in Mossgray saw the broken lily. An unexpressed understanding of some calamity fell upon the household; the blinds were drawn down in the family rooms—the voices were hushed even in the kitchen, and when any went up or down stairs, they

went in silence, as if death, and the reverence that belongs to death, were in the house. But the door of Liliass' room was not opened, and though the old man himself lingered near it ready to catch any sound, he would permit no intrusion on her; for now there could be no hope that Halbert was wrong, and the grief of his youthful days came back to the heart of Adam Graeme, as he thought of those young hopes setting, like the sun, in the dark sea of death.

It was twilight, and he had returned to his study—soft, downy masses of clouds just touched with the lingering colours of the sunset were piled up like mountains of some dreamy fairyland on that wonderful placid sea of heaven, and long strips of coast and floating tinted islands stretched along the whole breadth of the sky. He sat, sadly, looking at them, and thinking of the holy, calm land beyond, where the sun of hope and promise sets never more, when his watchful ear caught the sound of a slow step ascending the stair. He looked towards the door with painful interest. It was Liliass. She had laid aside the light summer dress which she had worn in the morning, and the old man started as he looked upon the shadowy, drooping figure in its heavy, black garments, and the perfectly pale face on which no shade of colour remained. He rose to meet her; but Liliass seemed comparatively calm.

“I have brought it to you, Mossgray.”

She spoke very slowly as if deliberate pain were necessary to produce each single word. She had brought *it*—the messenger of death.

And laying it on the table before him, Liliass sat down on Charlie's chair, and leaning her heavy head upon her hand, lifted her eyes to the old man's face as he read the letter.

Such a letter he had once received—but this was written by a friend of the dead, and written with tears as it had been read, though the tears were very different. The writer said his dear friend Grant, travelling for his health to some place among the mountains where health was to be found, had joined a British Company, a few officers and a small band of men, on the way; that one of the revolted Affghan tribes had encountered them, and after a desperate and unavailing struggle, the small, brave force had been utterly cut to pieces, and it was impossible even to recover the bodies of the slain. Mossgray shuddered as he came to this conclusion of the kind, well-meaning letter, and felt what torture it must have

inflicted; yet it was gently done, and in few words, as is the kindest, when such tidings are to be told.

She was looking at him; with the deep, blue, wakeful eyes which cast wan light like the moon over her colourless face, she was reading his countenance.

"My poor Liliass!" said the kind Mossgray—he could say nothing more.

And then, in her slow, painful way, she began to speak. It was so great a grief to hear every distinct convulsive word as she uttered it, that the old man could hardly gather their import while he listened. She did not look at him now; her eyes were wandering through the vacant room, opened widely, as though she dared not cast down their lids, and the slow tide of her speech—those single words which came from her lips, like so many life-drops from a heart, pained to the utmost the gentle soul of Adam Graeme. She wanted to tell him that now she was alone—that she had only one wish now, separate from Mossgray, and that was to see his mother.

"My poor child," said the old man, as Liliass came to this point, and laboured with her convulsed utterance to articulate the words: "We will speak of this another time when we *can* speak of it; but now you must rest."

And when he spoke of rest she laid down her head upon her hands, and her agony returned upon her.

"Liliass," said the old man, "what if he had changed?—what if you had learned that he was not what you believed him to be? Rather thank God that bravely in honour and faith, he has been taken home; in the odour and grace of youth, before evil days or stains came upon him. Liliass, there are sorrows harder than yours—you shall find again him whom you have lost. There are those who have lost, and shall find never more, because they are parted not by this faithful and pure death, but by the dark barriers of sin and change. Liliass, my good child!"

She did not hear him; the words fell on her ear indefinite as the sound of the stream without, for words do not bring comfort to the desolate heart of grief when the blow has fallen newly.

And then she went away again slowly and painfully to her own darkened room. Halbert met her on the stair but she did not speak to him, and her wan face, and deep mourning dress, awed the light-hearted Halbert into reverential silence. He was not light-hearted then—he almost felt that

his own happiness was selfish in the presence of such grief.

And the old man paced heavily his large, low, study-room, thinking with tender compassion of his ward, the orphan, and the widowed. It brought back the days of his own pained and struggling youth, and he remembered how gentle to him would have been this hand of death instead of the more cruel stroke which laid his early dreams in the dust. He thought of Lucy Murray and of her tears—tears which fell singly in their force and bitterness like the words of Liliás; and he thanked God that rather thus the stroke had fallen upon his child. She was now doubly his child—left to him alone for care and succour—set apart from all the world.

But Liliás grew calm; there was no fever in the great stillness of this grief—no antagonist powers of hope and uncertainty to sicken her with its fretting painful life. She was fitted for her lot; and when she entered again the little world in which they lived, there was a saintly repose about her mourning, a hush of deep melancholy in her atmosphere, which subdued and mellowed all who approached her. But there was no elasticity left; the human hopes, the warm links which unite the living to the world they dwell in, had all been snapt for Liliás. Except the reverend duty of a child for the old man who mourned with her for the dead, she had no other bond to the world.

And so it happened that she came to stand, as we sometimes see the afflicted, alone upon the solitary isthmus between the earth and heaven. The changing tide of human life seemed to have left her there—above the reach of the benign and gentle hand of change—above the happy impatiences—the impulse and varying motive of the common lot; standing alone among the stars, waiting till her summons came.

She was very gentle, very mild, very calm—but it was less sympathy than reverence that attended her. The human life had ebbed away from her lonely feet, and she grew feeble as she moved in her melancholy, shadowy grace about that old house of Mossgray. They tended her in silent pity as they might have tended a hermit spirit, and she repaid them as she could with her resigned and patient mildness; but they thought of her as one about to pass away, fated to another life than this of earth.

CHAPTER VIII.

I'm young and stout, my Marion,
Nane dances like me on the green,
And gin ye forsake me, Marion,
I'll e'en gae draw up wi' Jean.—SONG.

It was past midsummer. Halbert Graeme, younger of Mossgray, was already a famous man in the country-side, and had not his gentle kinsman been more gravely occupied through that long, slow summer, we are not sure that the Laird would have been quite satisfied with the considerable number of incipient flirtations which Halbert had on his hands. At Firthside, at Mount Fendie, and all neighbouring places where youthful people were, Halbert was immensely popular; and it was very true that Miss Georgina Maxwell and he had been experimenting a little upon each other; very true that Adelaide Fendie blushed her dull blush when her mischievous sister plied her with raileries touching the gallant Halbert. Adelaide was seventeen, and her large, soft, good-humoured face was not uncomely; besides she had begun to read greedily Maxwell Dickson's select and edifying collection of novels, and seventeen is quite the heroic age for young ladies of the Minerva Press. Adelaide thought it was full time that she should begin a private romance of her own.

And Halbert's letters to the North were by no means so frequent as they used to be. He was often very busy now, and really believed that he had not time to write; besides that, there had been a very pretty quarrel between him and the gentle Menie, provoked on her side by some saucy allusions to the Lillias whom he praised so much, and on his by some pique at a certain young Laird, who began to bulk very largely in the Aberdeenshire glen.

It was the market day in Fendie, and Halbert now attended the markets, where both buyers and sellers had learned to know the young Laird of Mossgray. These groups of rustical people—strong, tall, red-whiskered men, with their immense stooping shoulders, and primitive blue coats and universal gray plaids, worn in this brilliant June weather to keep out the heat, as in January they kept out the cold,

whom you see stalking about the Main Street, with long deliberate steps, lifting their feet high, so that you fancy they must believe themselves still wading among the heather, acknowledged his acquaintance by grasping the rusty brim of the unbrushed hat as he passed them. More dignified, the lounging farmers in their short coats of gray plaiden, gathered in knots about the door of the inn where their stout ponies and comfortable gigs had been put up, held erudite conversation with young Mossgray on the markets, the weather, and the "craps." He was perfectly at home among them; had they been Ojibbeway Indians, the result would have been quite the same. He was born to make friends anywhere, this brisk cosmopolitan Halbert.

He had just been at the post-office, and was carrying home with him the letters of the household. There was one for himself, directed in the large, stiff handwriting of his old teacher: but Halbert was not so anxious about Mr Monikie's letter as he would once have been; he put it coolly into his pocket till his market business should be over.

At last, having discussed all the momentous subjects of the day, ascertained all the prices, and recognized all his acquaintances, Halbert felt that his duty was done, and that he might return home. But he had only opened the seal of Mr Monikie's despatch, with its agreeable odour of black rappee, and ascertained that it contained no enclosure from Menie, when he heard the clatter of John Brown's light cart on the road behind him. Halbert closed the letter again; it was by no means of pressing interest; at the moment he preferred a chat with John.

"Fine weather this," said the young Laird.

"Ay, its weel eneuch," said John Brown, examining the sky with the curious eye of a connoisseur, "but ower drouthy, Sir—ower drouthy; and ower muckle drouth is guid for neither beast or body, let alane the craps. Yon muckle park at Shortrigg will be burnt brown afore the July rain, and syne it'll be as wat as a peat moss; ye'll never be dune, Sir, noo ye hae ta'en up the farming trade—ye'll never be dune battling wi' the weather."

Halbert laughed.

"I am not so warlike, John. I shall be content with the rain when it comes. Are they all well at the Mount—Mrs Fendie and the young ladies?"

"Middling, middling," said John Brown; "we have our

bits of touts noo and then, but we're no to compleen o' ; and the noo, we've nae time to think o' being no weel, for Mr Alick's coming hame."

"Indeed ! " said Halbert ; the news interested him. " When does Mrs Fendie expect him, John ? "

" I hear about the harvest—August or September," said the factotum of Mount Fendie ; " but we're gaun to gar the haill countryside stand about, so we've begoud in time. But ye'll mind he's no a free-spoken, pleasant lad like yourself, Mr Graeme, begging your pardon for the freedom ; he's ane o' your fleeaway sodger officers, and there's mair o' the same kind coming wi' him."

Halbert enjoyed his popularity ; but at the same time he became still more interested in Alick Fendie, who being less popular, promised to be more aristocratic than himself.

" Has he been long in India, John ? " asked Halbert.

" Na, no that lang. I mind him mysel frae he was a kit-tlin o' a laddie like that wee evil spirit o' a brither o' his. He's been twa—three years out bye yonder," and John jerked his ponderous thumb in the direction of the sea. " I wad just like to see him fechtin—or the like o' him—fusionless, shilpit laddies. I'm no Wallace Wight myself, but if I couldna tak twa o' them in ilka hand!—and that minds me, Mr Graeme, that my auntie Eesabell up at Murrayshaugh bothers folk even on about your young lady. I'm no meaning the lady that is to be ye ken, but just Miss Maxwell. Our auld auntie's ta'en a notion that she kens some o' the auld family—the Murrays. Its a' havers, ye ken, for Miss Lucy's aulder, if she's leeving, than Eesabell hersel ; but the young lady hasna been at Murrayshaugh for lang, and the auld wife deaves a'budy asking about her. I tell't her it was said in the town that Miss Maxwell was no weel. She's aye bee awfu' delicate like ; isna she no weel, Mr Graeme ? "

" She has been very ill," said Halbert ; " but she is recovering now, I hope. She lost a friend lately."

John Brown paused respectfully, rendering the instinctive homage which men pay to grief.

" I saw Robbie Caryl the day," said John, after an interval ; " Robbie was in last week wi' some grand salmon at Dumbraes market, and he saw a man there that has a son a sodger, somegate near where Mr Alick is ; and there's word—sure word, Robbie says—that Peter Delvie—ye wadna ken Peter ? was killed yonder wi' a wheen mair, fechtin wi' thae

wild Indians—Affghans—what is't they ca' them? Onyway Peter's dead; and what the auld man, Saunders, will say till't, noo, is mair than I ken."

"He was harsh to him, I believe," said Halbert.

"Ay, ye may say that; but I'm no sae sure he aye meant it; ye see he was proud o' the lad, and when he gaed an ill gate, Saunders nigh broke his heart. Ye wad maist say he had na heart, yon hard auld man—but it's ill telling. Robbie was gaun to the minister to get him to break it to Saunders. I wadna do't for a' Fendie."

The roads to Mossgray and the Mount separated at this point. Whistling gaily, John Brown set off at considerable speed, to make up for the gossiping slow pace with which he had begun; and Halbert leaped over the stile, and again opened the letter of Mr Monikie.

It was a startling letter; the young man's face flushed with the angry colour of mortification and wounded pride, as he read it:

"I hear from Menie," wrote the pragmatical man of Aberdeen, "that you are not so good friends as you might be; and you know how often I have warned you, Halbert, about the danger of an unstable temper; a weakness to which I have always seen you were liable. It is a bad sign of a lad like you—a great evil—to have an unsteady mind, and to meditate breaking lightly the ties you have yourself made. Even as it regarded only yourself, I would have thought it my duty to impress your infirmity upon you, but far more when it endangers the comfort of a girl like my Menie. It disappoints me, Halbert; I confess that, though I might know better, after my long experience as a teacher of youth, I had expected other things from you; but human nature, even with all advantages, and when its judgment is matured like mine, is prone to vain expectations, and you have disappointed me.

"I do not think I would be justified in trusting the happiness of a good girl like Menie in hands that want the firmness which is needful in my eyes to a manly character. I hoped you had more of it, Halbert; and Menie herself, like a dutiful child as she has always been, agrees with her father, and says she thinks you will be very glad to be free, and at liberty to form new engagements. Also Menie sends a message that she forgives you, and has given

to me the half of the coin you broke with her; a very foolish, superstitious, and heathenish ceremony, which I should have certainly condemned had I known of it, or could I have fancied that my daughter and my pupil would ever think of so foolish a thing.

"Young John Keith of Blackdean is giving us much of his company, and helps to keep up our spirits, otherwise we might have felt your backsliding even more than we do. I have never seen the marks of instability in him that I used to lament in you, though he has not had the same advantages of education; indeed in every way I have reason to be pleased with him, and so has Mrs Monikie and Menie. If Menie settles near us it will be a great satisfaction, and I think it is not unlikely.

"I hope you will learn to correct these faults which I have pointed out to you, and we will always be glad to see you here, in spite of what has passed. I trust I can forgive an injury, especially when it has been made an instrument of good; and if you hear of any changes in my family, I hope you will be able to think of them without any great disappointment, seeing that I always remain, with compassion upon the errors of your youth,

"Your sincere friend,

"MATTHEW MONIKIE."

Halbert was very red, very angry; he folded up the letter bitterly, and felt indignant at treatment so unjust. His first flash of jealous resolution was to start for Aberdeenshire immediately, and carry off the faithless Menie from his supplanter the Laird of Blackdean. The merry, pretty Menie! He had been getting rather indifferent, there was no denying that; but now when he had lost her, tender recollections of his first love returned to the honest heart of Halbert. Something swelled in his breast of that sad disappointment with which youthful people see the first tie of their own forming rudely snap asunder. One or two tears rose into his eyes; the petulant, fickle Menie was victor over him.

But Halbert was not long melancholy. He began to think of the injustice—the insult.

"It is very well for herself; she has only taken the first word of flyting; she was wise," muttered the angry Halbert, as he turned on his heel, and with a quick, impatient step went on to Mossgray; and so he salved his wounded pride

and consoled himself, not without a pleasurable consciousness, increasing as he grew familiar with the idea, that he was free.

Lucy Murray and Adam Graeme had borne the first epidemic grief of youth on that Waterside before him. This last example perfected the story of the others. The woman's sad endurance—the man's passionate pain—these were not types broad enough for universal humanity. Only a few here and there can feel as they did, but Halbert's lighter emotions were of the common stock; the momentary melancholy—the sting of mortification—the buoyance of new life and freedom. Lightly the cloud passed over the head of Halbert, a thing to be laughed at by and by; for he had no ideal to be sacrificed. And so he completed the tale of youthful disappointments; he brought them into the ordinary level, the common stream of life.

In the kitchen of Mossgray Robbie Caryl the fisherman stood in grave and earnest conversation with the old housekeeper and her niece. Neither cuddie nor creels were visible to-day, and Robbie himself wore his Sabbath-day's well-preserved suit, and his Sabbath-day's look of gravity.

"Eh, Robbie!" exclaimed Mrs Mense, "it's a judgment—it's just a visible judgment and retribution on that hard auld man! As if we werena sinfu' enough oursels to learn us mercy to our neighbours, let alane our ain bairns, bane of our bane, and flesh of our flesh."

"The minister says we maun hae sure word afore we tell Saunders," said Robbie; "as if the word we hae gotten wasna ower sure; but I say we've nae richt to keep the news frae the faither and the mother. Thea hae mair richt to ken than fremd folk. To be sure, I gied my word to the minister that I wad tell naebody. I'm saying, Jen, mind; till ance the minister maks his inquiries, ye're no' to say a word about it; though I kenna but what it wad be richt to tell the auld man, whether it turned out true or no, just to bring him to himsel'."

"Eh, preserve me!" said Janet Mense, "they say he put his curse upon the lad."

"I wadna say onything was ower hard for Saunders Delvie," said the fisherman.

"Whisht! nane o' ye ken," said the old woman. "If he had been mair moderate in his liking, he wad hae been mair

moderate in his wrath. I tell ye, nane o' ye ken. Wha's yon, Jen? is't no' Saunders, his ain sel'?"

The fisherman glanced eagerly out, and then drew back.

"I pat on my Sabbath-day's claes just for the purpose, but I canna face him now. I'll slip awa into the milk-house, Mrs Mense; and say naething to him. It's in the minister's hands; we maun just leave it to the minister."

So saying, Robbie with some trepidation hastened away to conceal himself in the dairy until the old man had passed.

The stern, harsh face of Saunders Delvie was lighted with a fire of strange and wild excitement. Defiance and yearning, tears and frowns, were strangely mingled in it. His voice shook, his gray eyelashes were wet, and under his heavy, bushy eyebrows his eyes shot out glances of fiery grief. His stern composure of manner was entirely broken. A burst of weeping, or a paroxysm of fierce rage, might, either of them, have brought to a climax the old man's unusual agitation. With his heavy, quick, unsteady step, he came into the kitchen of Mossgray. No one spoke to him, for both of the women were afraid.

Mrs Mense was sitting in her chair by the fireside; he went up to her hurriedly.

"Auld friend," he said abruptly, with that harsh tremor in his voice, more moving than many lamentations, "ken ye onything that concerns me or mine? tell me plain out what it is, for this I wunna bear."

"Oh, Saunders," exclaimed the old woman, wiping the tears from her withered cheek, "have pity upon the lad—the puir lad!"

"Is that a'? have ye nae mair to say but that?" said Saunders. Janet had followed the example of the fisherman, and the two old servants of Mossgray were alone. "Is that a'?" repeated Saunders, speaking rapidly, as if, in the contradictory impulse of his anxiety, he wished to prevent her from answering. "Ye're sure that's a'? Then I maun gang my ways—I maun tak counsel; if it's righteous it maunna be ower late; but I'll no' speak to the Laird. He's no' a man like me; he taks the reprobate and the race o' the reprobate into his bosom. Na, I winna speak to the Laird."

And lifting his head again with something of his usual rigid pride, the old man went away, as hastily as he had entered.

The market was over in Fendie, and as the summer afternoon drowsily waned, and the weekly stir subsided, Mr Oswald sat in his little private office alone. The banker was an elder of the Church, and a man, as Saunders thought, of kindred mind and temperament to his own. It was from him that he came to seek counsel.

Mr Oswald looked up in some astonishment as the old man was ushered into his *sanctum*.

"It's a case of conscience, Sir," said Saunders, in his harsh, tremulous voice. "I was wanting to ask your counsel."

Mr Oswald was a little startled. Cases of conscience were not quite in his way, although he had the ordination of the eldership upon him.

"Had you not better speak to the minister, Saunders?" he said; "but sit down, and tell me what troubles you."

The banker's heart was touched with the trembling vehemence of the old man's manner and appearance as he stood before him.

"Na, Sir, I canna speak to the minister," said Saunders. "The minister's a young man, and doesna ken the afflictions of the like o' me. He may hae comfort for his ain kind, but the griefs o' the gray head are aboon the ken o' lads like him. I canna speak to the minister."

Mr Oswald had heard the rumour of Peter Delvie's death, and pitied the stern old father; again he asked him to sit down.

Saunders took the offered seat, and pressed his bonnet convulsively between his hands.

"It's touching the lawfulness of a vow—a vow before the Lord."

Mr Oswald's voice faltered a little; an indefinite thrill of conscience moved him.

"What is it, Saunders?"

"I made a resolve," said the old man, his features twitching, and his strong, harsh voice shaking with the very force of his determination to steady it, "to put forth ane—an^e that had sinned—out from my house as an alien and a reprobate. He had shamed the name that righteous puir men had laboured to keep honest for him—he had sinned in the sight of God and man; and before the Lord I pat him forth, and took a vow on me that he should cross my doorstane never mair. Maister Oswald, ye're an elder of the Kirk,

and a man of years, and ane that has had bairns born to ye, and ken—am I no' bound before the Lord to haud to my vow?"

Mr Oswald moved upon his chair uneasily. He could not answer.

"I have had converse with Mossgray," continued Saunders, shrill tones of excitement mingling with the usual slow, grave accents of his broken voice, "but Mossgray is anither manner of man, and kensna—kensna the like o' me. He tells me that change is a guid gift of God, given for our using like ither providences, and that what I have said wi' my lips may be broken, and me no mansworn—but I say, no—I ken nae law ither than the auld law of Scripture, and I maun perform to the Lord my vow. Sir, Mr Oswald, think ye not so?"

The old man's shaggy eyelash was wet, but the fire shot forth behind. Strongly the two contending powers within him struggled for the mastery. He wanted his authority to second the dictates of the yearning nature, which, moved by whispers of some unknown calamity to his son, contended bitterly with the stern obstinacy of his temper and his sense of right; yet he had entered upon the oft-repeated arguments, with which he had been used to defend himself against the gentle attacks of Mossgray, and was becoming heated in his own defence. If the banker had pronounced his judgment against the breaking of this vow, it would have carried a bitter pang to the old man's heart, and yet would have been a triumph. He sat, pressing his bonnet in his hard hands, and shaking like a palsied man. He had put his fate on this chance. He had resolved to make the judgment of the other pertinacious man to whom he appealed, his final rule, and anxiously he waited for the decision.

But George Oswald moving there uneasily in his elbow chair was too much perplexed and conscience-stricken to give a ready answer. The vehement father-love of Saunders Delvie, which in its agony of disappointed hope produced this vow, sublimed the old man's sternness and lifted it out of the class of ordinary emotions. It was not anger, or wounded pride, or shame alone, but it was all these, intensified and burning with the strong, bitter love which still worshipped in its secret heart the son whom it had expelled from his home. The worldly man who had put the barrier of his disapproval in the way of *his* son's happiness, for such paltry

motives as Saunders Delvie never knew, felt himself abashed in presence of the old, stern peasant, whose appealing eye was upon him.

"Saunders," said Mr Oswald, with a faltering voice, "we are bound at all times to forgive."

"It's no that I dinna forgive him," cried the old man in his passion. "It's no that I dinna think upon him night and day—it's no that—oh man! do ye no ken?"

And Saunders, forgetting all artificial respectfulness, put down his gray head into his hard toil-worn hands and sobbed aloud—such strong convulsive sobs as the awed banker had never heard before.

Hope Oswald had opened the door very quietly to look in, and the instincts of childhood were scarcely yet subdued in the young heart of the banker's daughter. She came softly across the room to stand by Saunders' side, and touch his hand with awe and pity.

"Saunders," whispered Hope, "maybe it is not true—the minister says it is not true."

The old man lifted his face; no face less stern could have been moved so greatly.

"What is't that's no true?"

"Poor Peter!" said Hope, with tears upon her cheek, "do you mind how good he aye was, Saunders? and his heart broke, people say, because you were angry at him; but you are not angry now; and when he comes back you will go out to meet him like the man in the Bible, and be friends? for, Saunders, you are friends with Peter now?"

He could not wait for any judgment; he could not think of any vow. A burst of weeping, such as might have hailed the prodigal's return, followed the simple speech of Hope. The living love within him burst through its perverse and unseemly garments; and those peaceful walls, unused to great emotion, had never heard such a cry as broke through them now, from lips that trembled as the great king's did of old, when he too wept for his Absalom. "My son! my son!"

CHAPTER IX.

"I am a son of Mars, who have been in many wars."—BURNS.

"Oh, Hope, Alick's come," exclaimed Adelaide Fendie one bright August day, as she alighted from the nondescript gig driven by John Brown, and went with her arm linked in her friend's into the banker's sober dining-room. "Mamma is so glad—we're all so glad—Alick's come."

"And, Hope," added Victoria, "somebody else is come too. It's the sword and cocked hat that Tibbie saw at Hallowe'en. Oh, Hope, if you only saw him!"

"Who is it, Adelaide?" asked Hope.

"It's—Alick's come," said the slow Adelaide with her dull blush, "mamma is so glad, Hope; and we're to have a ball and parties—I don't know how many—and Mossgray and young Mr Graeme are coming to dine to-morrow, and next week we are going to Mossgray—because Miss Maxwell will never go out anywhere now you know, and Mr Graeme wants to have Alick and me," added Adelaide, with a dignified consciousness of having reached the full years of young ladyhood. "I'm to go too."

"Will Mossgray ask you, Hope?" inquired Victoria.

"Hope is too young," said Adelaide, in her new dignity. "Doesn't mamma tell you, Victoria, not to talk about things you don't understand? but though you're too young to go out to parties yet, Hope, you're to come up and see Alick: and there's Alick's friends too, you know."

Hope was offended. She was full fifteen, and thought herself a very mature womanly person, so she condescended to ask no further questions about Alick's friends, though Victoria's malicious laugh, and the dull consciousness of Adelaide, made Hope a little curious; but Hope's mind was occupied with things of very much more importance than cocked hats or swords.

"Adelaide, does Alick know about Peter Delvie? oh, Mr Inches says perhaps it is not true—and poor Saunders!—does Alick know anything, Adelaide; does Alick think it is true?"

"Hope! do you think our Alick knows anything about Peter Delvie?"

"If he does not it is very bad of him," said Hope boldly; "for Peter is a Fendie man—they were both Fendie men away in yon great India; but did you not ask him, Adelaide? did you not think of poor Saunders when Alick came home?"

"I forgot, Hope," said Adelaide, more humbly.

"Will you not forget to-day then? will *you* mind, Victoria? and I will come up to the Mount to-morrow to hear; for Saunders thinks he is dead; oh, Adelaide, if he only were living to come back again!"

Hope had never been able to forget the agony of the old man; but her visitors were by no means interested.

"Do you mind Alick, Hope?" said Adelaide, "mamma says he is so improved; and he's as brown as he can be with the sun; and then there is Captain Hyde, Alick's friend; he is an Englishman, and belongs to such an old family. They came in with the Conqueror."

"And they called them Van Dunder at first," said the malicious Victoria, "and then they were married to a Miss Hyde, a rich lady: and now their full name is Dunder Hyde; but Alick says it should be Dunderhead, because he's so stupid."

"Victoria, I'll tell mamma," said the offended Adelaide.

"But Van Dunder is not like a Norman name," said Hope, who was more erudite; "it's like Dutch: are you sure they were Normans, Adelaide?"

"I don't know anything about Normans," said Adelaide, with dignity; "but I know that Captain Hyde's family came to England with King William; for he told me that—"

"But that would be Dutch William," said the historical Hope; "and does he wear a sword and a cocked hat; and do you like him, Adelaide?"

Adelaide drew herself up.

"Hope! what are you thinking of!"

"What is the matter," said the straight-forward Hope; "would it be wrong if you liked him? I am sure I like Halbert Graeme very well, and perhaps I will like Alick; but I like old Mossgray far better; and I wouldn't be afraid to say it."

"Young ladies should not speak so," said Adelaide, in her dull solemnity.

Hope was very innocent:—she still thought of a young

lady only as an ordinary mortal, and not as a professional person—for Hope, schemer and matchmaker as she was, had never been initiated into the system of mutual silliness with which boys and girls, just before they become men and women, surround each other; and although perfectly undefended from the romantic, and prone to be overpowered by it, whenever her hour should come, she had triple armour in her honest, artless temper, against all the affectations of the young lady and young gentleman period.

"Has Alick ever been in a battle?" inquired Hope with some awe.

"Oh, Hope, so many! Alick does not care about battles now," said Adelaide; "if you only heard Captain Hyde and him!"

"I wonder if he ever killed anybody," said Hope, with a shudder. "I wonder if he ever took away a man's life—maybe somebody's son, Adelaide, like poor Peter Delvie—or like the gentleman—"

"What gentleman, Hope?"

"I mean somebody I heard of," said Hope, prudently checking herself, as she remembered that what she knew of the bereavement of Lillas was not fit news for her gossiping companions; "but to take away a life, Adelaide,—I think it must be very terrible."

"I don't know, Hope," said the stolid Adelaide; "but Alick has been in so many battles that he does not care for them now—and so has Captain Hyde."

"And will you mind, Adelaide," said Hope, as she saw them again safely deposited in the gig, under the care of John Brown, "will you be sure to ask about Peter Delvie?—and I'll come up to-morrow to hear."

Adelaide promised, and they returned home; but the promise faded from Adelaide's memory before they were half-way to Mount Fendie; and when the faithful Hope went up to the Mount next day to ascertain the result of her friend's inquiries, there was much to be said about Captain Hyde, but nothing of the hapless Peter. The strangers were out. Hope did not see them—and she had to go away, contenting herself with another promise, which was in like manner broken.

Peter Delvie was an early friend of Hope's. He had helped her over burns, and comforted her when stung by the nettles and pricked by the thorns of juvenile mischance—

had pulled brambles for her from inaccessible hedge-rows, and fished unattainable water-lilies to her feet. Hope remembered all his gentle deeds, and liked the unfortunate Peter. And Saunders, in rigid, hopeless misery, was condemning himself as the murderer of his son; the old man's stern grief moved the young heart strangely. Hope would have endeavoured any exertion to bring comfort to the harsh, agonized, despairing heart.

A second disconsolate journey Hope had made to Mount Fendie; but Adelaide still forgot; and wearily, with something of the discontent and melancholy which elder people feel, in sight of the indifference and lack of sympathy displayed by the common herd, Hope was returning home.

She had entered the garden of Mossgray before she became aware that there were visitors in it. Under shadow of a fine beech tree, Lilius, in her mourning dress, sat on a garden seat. It was Saturday, and those holidays were now very frequently spent by Helen Buchanan with her pensive and delicate friend whose health needed all gentle care and tendance. Helen was standing behind Lilius, looking shy and something out of place, as she bent over the downcast Lily of Mossgray, and tried to shield her from the remarks sometimes addressed to her by the young men who stood with the Laird and Halbert at a little distance. The strangers were Alick Fendie and the redoubtable Captain Hyde; Hope did not know them—she came up, stealing under cover of the trees, to Lilius and Helen.

Lilius had turned her head away, where no one could see the drooping, melancholy face. They had been talking in her presence of those fatal Indian wars—had been running over, with careless levity, those names, made so bitterly memorable to her, of places where the dead had been. She had turned aside, with her trembling arm resting against the silvery beech; and Helen's eyes were cast down too, and no one saw what clouds were passing over the wan face of the Lily of Mossgray.

Hope did not think of that, as she advanced innocently to the mourner's side, and looked into her face; the tears were standing upon those colourless cheeks in large drops—the pale lips were quivering.

"Hope!" said Helen, in reproof.

Lilius put her hand upon Hope's, gently detaining her.

"Hope has been my shield before," she said in her low,

broken voice; and Hope's heart swelled with graver emotion than was wont to move it, as the drooping Lily leaned for a moment upon her shoulder. She remembered very well the other time—the bow window of Mrs Fendie's morning-room and the first meeting of Mossgray with his ward; but Lillas was still paler, still more fragile now, and people said she would not dwell long in this life.

The young heir of Mount Fendie, lieutenant in his regiment, but captain at home, was the model of his sister Victoria—malicious with a kind of pert cleverness, which passed muster for wit very well among the stupid Fendies; but Captain Hyde, his butt and companion, was much too complacent to be at all conscious of being quizzed. In himself a tall fellow of his hands—in estate a considerable proprietor in one of the rich English counties on the other side of the island—the arrows of ridicule glanced innoxiously from off the glittering armour of good-humoured self-importance which bucklered Captain Arthur Hyde.

"Poor Robertson," said Alick Fendie, in his loud voice, as Hope began to listen. "He was killed in that skirmish at—; but, by the by, don't you remember hearing a rumour before we left India, Hyde, that all these poor fellows were not killed after all?"

Captain Hyde gaped a "never heard it."

"I am sure you did," responded his brisk companion. "Why, man, don't you recollect? Somebody's servant had turned up, and reported that himself and his master were not dead—very near it—very badly wounded, but not killed outright, and that the Affghan fellows were nursing a lot of them—I think there was a lot; and the fellows who had taken them were just about to turn their coat; they are always doing that, these wretches of natives, and were taking care of them to curry favour with us; yes, to be sure we heard it. It was a mere rumour, you know, but it might be true. Anything may happen in India. Men get killed and then turn up again in the most miraculous way—eh, Hyde?"

Lillas had risen and turned round blindly to Helen, as if seeking support.

"Save me, Helen," said the Lily of Mossgray, "save me from this hope."

"And is that all? do you know nothing further about these unfortunate young men?" said the anxious voice of Mossgray.

"Nothing at all," answered Alick Fendie briskly. "It may not be worthy of the least credit what we did hear. I only give it you as a rumour."

"Lilias is ill; we will go in," said Helen, supporting her friend on the nervous, firm arm, which began to tremble in sympathetic sorrow. "Will you come to us when you can, Mossgray? Lilias is ill."

And Lilias was ill. After this long sinking in the deep waters of grief, the fever of hope was too much for her. Large, cold drops stood upon her white, shadowy forehead, her thin, wasted frame was shaken with sudden pains, the mist of blindness was upon her eyes, and the slender arm twined in Helen's leaned so heavily—you could not have fancied there was so much weight in the slight, drooping figure altogether as there was in that one thin arm.

"And, Captain Alick," said Hope, stepping forward bravely, "did you see Peter Delvie in India? They have sent home word that he is dead; do you think Peter is dead?"

"Why, I believe this is little Hope Oswald," exclaimed Captain Alick, shaking Hope's hand energetically, and offering a salutation from which Hope, immensely red and angry, withdrew in high disdain. "Why, Hope, you are taller than Adelaide; and what a little thing you were when I went away."

"Will you tell me about Peter Delvie, Captain Fendie?" said Hope, with some dignity.

"Who is Peter Delvie, Hope? I never saw him in India, I assure you. But why do you never come to the Mount? I must come and see you myself one of these days."

Hope went away dissatisfied and sad. Nobody would care except for themselves, nobody would attend to her inquiries, nobody would think of the old man who had lost his only child.

Lilias was sitting on a low chair, bending her head down upon her knees, as Mossgray looked in at the door of their usual sitting-room. Her face was hidden in her hands; she did not see him.

Helen stood close beside her, holding one of those feverish, hot hands.

"Helen, it is very hard to bear," said the broken Lily, "very terrible. I thought I was patient, I thought I had learned to endure; but this hope, this false, vain hope—I cannot bear it, Helen."

Helen answered nothing; she only pressed gently the thin, trembling fingers which lay in her own.

"And if it was true," said Lillas, "they were many, very many; would you have me hope that it was *him*—that *he* was saved alone?"

And then the wan face was lifted, supplicating, begging to be contradicted—instinct with its woeful entreaty that this hope which it called false might be pronounced true.

"Will you not speak to me!" said poor Lillas. "Have you nothing to say to me, Helen?"

"I cannot tell," said the faltering voice of Helen. "I have heard of very wonderful things; this may be one of them. What can I say, Lillas? There have been such deliverances before—I cannot tell."

Lillas rose up suddenly, and laid her arms upon Helen's shoulders, supporting herself there.

"He is the only son of his mother. She would pray for him night and day. Helen, Helen, there are few so blessed. Would they not be heard in heaven, those prayers?"

Poor Helen trembled as much in her strength as the other did in her weakness; she dared not recommend this hope to the sick heart, which had already grasped it so strongly.

"We must wait, Lillas," she said. "It is very hard, very hard to do it, I know, but it is in God's hands, and we must wait."

Lillas put up her hands to her head; she staggered as she withdrew from her support. A sickly smile came upon her face.

"I ought to go to his mother, Helen. Will you come with me to seek his mother? Mossgray is very good, very kind, but she has more need of me. She has not written, because she would think, like me, that he was dead; but it may be true. You have heard of very wonderful deliverances. You said so, Helen; you thought it might be true."

But Helen's head drooped. She feared to encourage the expectation.

Lillas sat down upon her low chair again, and again bent her head upon her knees; her feeble frame was distracted with bodily pains no less than her mind was with mental.

"I think my head is dizzy, Helen," she said, in her melancholy, broken voice. "I think I am forgetting myself—for this is only vain and false, a mockery of hope. I see it

is. If the grief were yours, Helen, you would see that this could not be true."

Those strange artifices of misery! they brought tears to the eyes of the looker-on, to whom this did indeed seem a mockery of hope.

"You must stay with her, Helen," said Mossgray, when they had left Liliass alone. "You must stay with her till I return. I cannot leave Fendie to-night, but to-morrow evening I will. I will go to London, and ascertain at once if there is any truth in this. Do not let Liliass know where I am nor what is my errand. I leave her with you in all confidence, Helen. You will be tender of my poor Lily."

CHAPTER X.

I do not hope—ah, no!—mine eyes are clear,
I see it would be vain; perchance, perchance,
Some other heart doth hope and will be blessed;
But mine—why should this gladness come to mine?
I have been used with grief;
A sombre way has mine been, all my days,
And yet perchance—oh, Heaven, such things might be!
As that one giant joy should come to me,
Eclipsing common joys.—OLD PLAY.

"HELEN," said Liliass, "do you think I am very weak?"

They were sitting alone together on the morning of the third day after Mossgray's departure. It was early, and Helen was just preparing to return to the daily labours which she could not intermit.

"I think you have had great trouble, Liliass, and you are not strong; but why do you ask me?"

"Helen," said the pale Liliass, "do you never think it is selfish to sink under this blow as I have done? I think it has sometimes come into your mind; *you* would not have done it, Helen?"

"We are not alike," said Helen, hurriedly. "I think I should have rebelled, I should have repined. I should have been like the Leonore of that ghastly ballad; but I have

my daily work to battle with, and little cares and little humiliations to teach me patience—yet I will never be so patient as you are, Liliias.”

“It is because I am alone, Helen,” said Liliias, in her faint, pleading tone of self-defence, “because there is no one in the world, not one, to whom I am the best beloved. If I had been like you—if my mother had lived—I think I should have been brave, Helen; but now I have only my grief, nothing more, in all this cold world.”

“And Mossgray, Liliias,” said Helen.

“I am very ungrateful,” said Liliias, bending her head. “I wanted you to think that I was not selfish, Helen; and yet to lose them all—to lose them both in one year, it is very bitter, very hard; you cannot tell how hard it is.”

She was very pale, though perfectly composed; but now as she paused, a red light seemed to flash across her face for a moment, the flicker of that unnatural, feverish hope which she fancied she had tried to quench, but which, instead, was gathering strength every hour, and lighting up her heart with an unnatural radiance.

“I wish you could work as I have to do, Liliias,” said Helen, as she drew her homely shawl about her. “I think it would be good medicine if you were strong enough. If we could only change, if you could fight a little as it is natural for me, and I could be patient as you are; but we must be content. I am going out now to my little battle-ground; there are some struggles and bitternesses in it, you know; will you try to-day to think how important you are to all of us—to us all here, Liliias, and to let the sun come in upon you?”

“These long days!” said Liliias. “I am not patient, Helen. I think they will never come to an end. Will you bring some of the children with you? Hope Oswald—any of them. I like to see the children; and we will try to-night to forget—to forget,” said Liliias, with the flickering red light upon her face again, “not the sorrow, but the hope.”

The feverish hope which had so frail a foundation to build its airy fabric on—what was it that wakened out of the gentle passive depths of Liliias’s mind the feeling that her sinking calm of grief was wrong, and that there was need to exert herself to cast it off? It was not reason, it was not thought; in was a new hysteric strength, other than comes

from the deliberated wisdoms of man; a fluttering meteoric light, springing up about her, dangerously exciting, desperate, wild. She said she would forget it; she did not know that it was the fairy strength of this hope inspiring her, which made it possible that she should forget.

And while Lillas began to move about the house in the new strength, which, she fancied, arose from a resolve to exert herself and show her gratitude to her friends, Helen went quickly down the Waterside to her daily labour. Her quick, nervous, tell-tale motions seemed to have been subdued in presence of the mourner, and her face looked paler and quieter than was its wont. That varying temperament of hers had a strange facility of catching the tone of the atmosphere in which she was, and wearing it unconsciously as the sky wears the clouds. The happy good-morrow twitterings—not songs—of the birds among the dewy glistening leaves confused the stronger voice of the wan water, and filled all the fresh morning air with inarticulate music—cheerful sounds came through the intervening trees from Fendie. Children, yonder, on the high-road began to flock out of the cottage doors to school. Scarcely any heart could refuse to rise with the buoyant upspringing new day; but along the green, soft path, and through this plain of long waving grass by the side of the bridge, Helen Buchanan went quietly with a dimness on her face.

She had cares and bitternesses enough, as she said. William Oswald was still in Edinburgh; he had not been home even for a day; but the Reverend Robert had learned with inexpressible surprise and considerable pain that the young schoolmistress of Fendie did not choose to accept the dignified position to which he had elected her. It was almost the first rebuff he had met with since the triumphant beginning of his career, and he was a mortal young man, though he was a minister, and felt the mortification of being rejected to its fullest extent. So the Reverend Robert concealed the disappointment of the true honest feelings which did him honour under a veil of pique and pride. He could not manage to be indifferent, yet in his manner, when he accidentally met her, and in his attempt at indifference, was almost rude to Helen. Her sensitive pride began to rise again in full tide; people had begun to notice her for the sake of the minister, who now believing, as thoughtless malice said, that the minister had

changed his mind and withdrawn in time, withdrew too, and marked the change: and Mrs Buchanan's little quiet house fell into its old loneliness once more.

And the old weariness came sometimes back, and forlorn bitter thoughts swelled sometimes again about the changing heart. It was the penalty she paid for her power to endure and to enjoy.

So she went to her usual labour, and worked at it as she had worked for years; but other schools were rising in Fendie, where the little daughters of the masons and joiners and seamen of the good town could acquire a greater stock of accomplishments than Helen professed—where the fancy-work flourished in a perfect luxuriance of patterns, and the sober "whiteseam," which was poor Helen's staple, was thrust aside in disgrace. Helen was so foolish as to have an opinion on this subject; she had a good deal of wilfulness about her, it must be confessed; she thought it an honourable craft for those small maidens of hers, the manufacture of garments for their various homes; but was somewhat impatient of the tawdry prettinesses after which their ambition yearned.

It did her a little harm this weakness of aesthetical feeling; she thought of the natural fitness and propriety, and they gave her no thanks; and so it chanced that Helen got few new scholars. She felt the evils of competition; as her elder girls dropped off with their quota of education completed, younger ones did not come in to fill up the declining numbers, even when the young schoolmistress having discovered her error began not very willingly to amend it. Mrs Buchanan was beginning to look very sad and careworn; the steps of the coming wolf were already at the door.

The half year's rent would soon be due, and the mother and daughter, in their anxious consultations, could by no means see where it was to come from. And the banker Oswald was their landlord; the gentle widow and the proud, sensitive Helen were at one in that point; there was nothing that they would not rather do than delay their payment by a single day.

Mrs Buchanan's little portion was very attenuated now; the expenses of her husband's illness and death had nearly swallowed it up, and the remnant was in the form of bank shares; but the very meagre dividend which this little capital yielded yearly was not above half what was necessary for this dreaded rent. The good mother painfully hoarded the little

stock of school-fees; painfully expended what was absolutely needed—and lay awake far into the night and started again before the sun was up, calculating that sad arithmetic which could not issue in anything but a failure—laboriously trying to bring together the two ends which would not meet.

So Helen needed the natural spring and buoyant life of her temperament as much as Liliās did the gentle human touch of hope: their sorrows were apportioned to them by the same Hand which did so diversely create their spirits. Liliās had been very patient, until this wild light of hope broke in upon her still dead sorrow; and now Helen was bravely fighting against the cold incoming tide of neglect and poverty; holding up a high heart above the waves, and keeping as she could, unwetted by the chill spray about her, the wings of her strong life.

The banker Oswald was looking on; he had managed to ascertain so much of their need, and means, and mode of life as would have added bitterness to their struggle had Mrs Buchanan or her daughter known of it; and with singular interest and even some excitement, as he might have looked at a strong swimmer contending with the stronger current, the obstinate man looked on. To see these women battling so stoutly with a tide more powerful than that under which Walter Buchanan had sunk in his mid-day; to observe how Helen bore her fall from the temporary elevation which the minister's attentions had procured for her, and went upon her way alone in her own unconscious dignity, so open to all kindnesses, still, and with the frank, clear skies of youth constantly breaking through the clouds of injured pride—no thought of coming to the rescue entered the mind of the banker, but there were no two persons in Fendie, out of his own household, whom he observed with half the interest which fascinated him to these. He fancied William had altogether forgotten the poor schoolmistress, and while he was entirely satisfied that such should be the case, a certain shade of contempt for this, obtruded itself into the pride with which he regarded the rising name of his son: but had William suddenly presented himself to ask the banker's consent, as he had done before, the answer would still have been the same; he was still determined, unchangeable, bound by the resolution which nothing should break—never!

"I do not know what to say to Liliās, mother," said Helen, as in the afternoon she prepared to return to Mossgray,

where Mrs Buchanan was to accompany her. "You will know—I cannot speak to her of this, for it would be terrible to lead her to hope, and then have that dreary blank of disappointment return again—and such disappointment! It is not like our troubles—troubles which could be almost altogether removed by what would be a very little matter to Mossgray; but Liliass has a heavier burden than we have."

"The present trouble looks aye the hardest, Helen," said Mrs Buchanan. "She is young, and has many friends—she will forget; but you must fight on, my poor bairn. I feel your trouble more than hers."

Helen could lament herself into despondency without much difficulty, but the perverse temperament would not droop for any will but its own.

"Hush, mother!" said Helen; "it is only a fight after all, and there is nothing so very bad in having to labour; I could not do without it, I think, and we will get through yet, no fear."

Mrs Buchanan shook her head.

"I hope so, my dear—I hope we shall, Helen; but how we are to do at Martinmas I cannot tell."

"The fear of ill exceeds the ill we fear," said Helen, with a bright face. "We will do all we can, mother, and we will manage somehow—do not let us think of it to-night."

Mrs Buchanan's heart did not rise as her daughter's did; but the good mother was ready to brighten too, lest those occasional gleams of sunshine, the sole solace of Helen's toiling life, should be overcast.

"When is Hope to come?" she asked, "and what made Liliass think of asking Hope, Helen?"

"She wanted to escape from her own thoughts—at least she said so, mother—she wanted to be prevented from dwelling upon her hopes and fears for this night; and the grown-up people, the young ladies and the young gentlemen, would have tormented rather than eased her. Poor Liliass! I think she has some idea of Mossgray's errand; she has not asked much about him, but a step without makes her shiver, and at night she grows so anxious. You are used to nervous people, mother, but when Liliass is nervous—so calm as she naturally is—it is far more painful to see, I think, than any natural tremor. Are you ready? for there is Hope."

Hope led by the hand a little white-froaked, blue-eyed girl, the little Mary Wood of whom she had spoken so much.

Miss Swinton had remained only a day in Fendie, and to Hope's great disappointment, had not seen Helen ; but the little Mary was left with Mrs Oswald for a long visit. Hope was exceedingly fond and proud of the child, and eager to display its juvenile wisdom and attainments. They all set out together for Mossgray.

"My papa is in India," said little Mary Wood, sliding her small hand into the trembling fingers of Lillas, as they sat under cover of the great beech, watching the autumn sun sink gorgeously over the western hill ; "and when I am a big lady I'm to go to India too, and then I'm to be married to somebody—Miss Mansfield says so, Hope."

And Lillas laughed tremulously with the others, communicating a sick melancholy tone to the very sound of mirth.

"But Miss Mansfield says so, Miss Maxwell ; and Miss Mansfield is a grown-up lady ; she's bigger than Miss Buchanan—isn't she, Hope ?"

"Never mind Miss Mansfield ; nobody cares about her," said Hope ; "but look, little Mary, look at yon star!—oh, Helen, look ! in among the gold clouds, and it so white and cold like—I know what it's like."

"Oh ! what is it like, Hope ?" cried little Mary Wood, who had the greatest possible admiration of Hope's stories.

"It's like somebody—somebody like what folk are in books," said Hope, "standing in among the rich common people ; it's far better than the clouds—it's as good as the sun, only it's not so great ; but for all that, look at it, how it's shaking, and how pale it is ; but it knows it is better than the clouds."

Little Mary looked up wonderingly in awe of Hope's occult acquaintance with the star ; but this did not strike her as Hope's stories generally did ; for she said, after a little pause,—

"I wish it were to-morrow—I wish it were the day after to-morrow."

"Why, Mary ?" said Lillas.

"Because Miss Swinton said papa was going to write me a letter, and that I would get it to-morrow, or the day after to-morrow. A whole big letter to myself—a letter from papa, all the way from India—oh, Miss Maxwell !"

Lillas trembled a little ; a slight painful shiver, as if of cold. She remembered well the time so long marked and looked for.

"The night is getting chill," said Mrs Buchanan; "I think we must go in now; and come tell me, little Mary, about these great designs of yours."

"Mary is very little," said Hope, apologetically, taking the vacant place by the side of Lillas; "she says just what comes into her head, you know, Miss Maxwell."

"And do *you* not say what comes into your head, Hope?"

"But then I am not like Mary, Helen," said Hope promptly; "I am fifteen—I know—at least I should know better than little Mary. Do you know when Mossgray is coming back, Miss Maxwell?"

Lillas shivered again. "No, Hope."

Poor Hope! she was not so very much wiser than little Mary, after all.

The harvest moon had risen; the night was considerably advanced; Mrs Buchanan had set out with Hope and the child some time since; Helen and Lillas were alone.

They were sitting together in the deep recess of one of those old-fashioned windows, and the room was perfectly dark, save for the broad, full moonlight which made bars of silver light across the gloom. They were speaking in the hushed tone which people instinctively adopt at such times, and Helen was endeavouring to keep the attention of Lillas occupied, although her broken answers and unconnected words showed how ill she accomplished it, and frequent starts and intervals of listening evinced the anxiety of both.

"Let us have lights, Lillas," said Helen; "it is not good this—it will do you harm."

"Yes," said Lillas, vacantly—"I mean, wait a little—only wait a little, Helen."

She had repeated the excuse again and again, and now grasping her friend's arm with those tightened fingers, she bent her pale head in the full mellow moonlight, and listened, shivering with the chills and starts of expectation.

There was a slight noise below.

"There is some one coming, Helen," and the trembling fingers tightened in their eager grasp. "It is not Halbert—it must be Mossgray—hush!"

"It is only Janet moving below," said Helen.

"Hush—listen! it is Mossgray! but I dare not go to meet him. Stay with me, Helen—stay till he comes! Now—now—it will be over now!"

And speaking incoherent words of prayer, Lillas held her

eager friend tight, so that she could not escape, and turned her own bowed head towards the door.

Lightly up the stair came the elastic footstep, and Mossgray opened the door gently, and stood before them in the grace of his old age, the moonbeams mingling with his white hair.

"Where are you?" said the old man, looking into the dark shadows of the room. "Helen, is she strong? can she bear joy?"

"Mossgray!"

"My good child, there are others in the world to guard your strength for. He is not strong himself, poor fellow! He has had wounds and sickness; but he lives to thank God, Liliass, as we do."

The room was reeling round her, with its heavy shadows, and bars of broad white light. She held firmly by the firm form of Helen, and laying down her dizzy head upon her friend's shoulder, closed her eyes. She resigned her strained faculties willingly—at present she did not crave more; the quietness—the peace—fell over her like the moonlight—it was enough.

"Has she fainted, Helen?" asked Mossgray, anxiously, after a considerable pause.

Liliass lifted her head, still sick and dizzy, but with a sickness so different from that of grief.

"No, Mossgray, I am strong."

And so she was, though she wavered and staggered in the moonlight, and scarcely could stand without support as yet. The winds had spent themselves and past away; the unusual fever had fled in a moment, and in her quietness she was herself again. Already the quick, wild pulse had fallen into its usual gentle beating; the turbulent strength of joy was not hers, any more than the passionate might of grief; but, in the great peace of her gladness Liliass was strong.

And then the old man told them his tidings fully; how this very mail had brought home the certain news; how *he* did not survive alone, but various others, officers and men, shared his fancied loss, and sure restoration; how the wounded men on the field where the little band had been cut to pieces, were left to the tender mercies of an Affghan tribe, whose fierce chief had perished in the encounter; how the son of this rebel Rajah had been trained by a captive

Englishman, long ago seized by the wandering banditti of the tribe, and knew of justices and generousities higher than are taught by the creed of Mahomet; how the young sovereign saw how vain the struggle was between his shifting, unstable countrymen and the steady British arms, and moved by policy alike, and friendliness, had caused gentle succour to be given to the helpless wounded British men who were within his power; how they had travelled to his capital, and found his English tutor there, now, after long oppression and confinement, a free and honoured man, and how, with gifts and compliments, the strongest of the prisoners had been dismissed, and the brave young merchant, Grant, was to follow when he could.

Dim, dubious, inarticulate thoughts were rising in the old man's mind as he told this story, touching a long-past sorrow—a visionary hope of his own; but he gave them no utterance—and Liliass' face had not lost the flush with which she heard the name of its title—brave—when Mossgray placed a letter in her hand. Liliass was strong now; she hurried away to her own apartment with this crowning joy of all.

“I waited in Fendie till they should arrange their letters,” said Mossgray, “that I might see if there was anything for Liliass, and I got what I desired, Helen. There are other things in this story which interest me greatly. I wonder—but we shall hear, no doubt, when this young man comes home.”

The letter was a very brief one, written while he was still scarcely able to hold the pen, as the unsteady characters bore witness, and only assuring her that he was safe and out of danger, and whenever his wounds permitted, would hasten home.

“Does he say nothing of—the Englishman?” said Mossgray, anxiously, when Liliass came down to tell him.

But the letter said nothing of any Englishman; the writer had been too feeble to write anything but the few words which told his safety, and that he was carefully tended—“in good hands.”

CHAPTER XI.

Open the lattice; let the fresh, soft air
Bear in sweet Nature's psalm;
Draw the dim curtain quick—the sun is there,
Holy and bright and calm—
And here a heart trembles for very gladness,
Which yesternight fainted twixt hope and sadness.

WHEN Liliás awoke next morning, her heavy black dress was nowhere to be found. It had been put away out of sight, and a light muslin one was laid in its place. The Lily of Mossgray put on the happier garment with reverence, murmuring to herself psalms of thanksgiving. She had wakened so often to the blank of hopeless grief, that she felt now a solemn gravity in this new beginning of life; it seemed to her like the visible interposition of the Divine Hand—a miracle of joy.

The blinds had been drawn up, and the morning sun looked brightly into the room. These little imaginative attentions could be rendered only by Helen, but Helen had left the room before Liliás awoke from the long, happy sleep of her new peace.

In a room below Helen stood beside the old housekeeper. A great pile of white linen lay on the table before them, and Mrs Mense was exhausting herself in its praise.

"Na, if ye had Mossgray's ain muckle spyglass that sits up the stair at the study window, ye could scarce count the threads," said the old woman, triumphantly; "it's that fine; and ye see, Miss Buchanan, Mr Halbert's no' what ye could ca' weel supplied, coming out from amang fremd folk, ye ken. I've been wanting to see about getting them made this lang time, only I didna like to fash the young lady; but Mossgray says I may speak to her noo. Do ye think I may speak to Miss Liliás noo, and no fash her, Miss Buchanan?"

"What is it, Mrs Mense?" said Liliás, coming forward with a peaceful light upon her face which could not be misapprehended. The old woman glanced at her changed dress and brightened.

"Ye see, Miss Lillie, it's just the new linen. I dinna

think ye ever lookit at it before; is't no' beautiful? And I was just thinking we should hae it made. Ye see, Mr Halbert he hasna ower mony, and to be ploutering and washing ance in a fortnight like common folk disna do for the like o' us; and ye micht get some yoursel', Miss Lillie; some o' the new-fashioned kind wi' the frills, for it's a muckle web, and it wad be a guid turn to somebody, the making o' them."

Helen was twisting a corner of the linen nervously in her fingers.

"I think I could get some one to do it for you, Lilies, if you could trust me," she said.

"And you're just the best to ken, Miss Buchanan," said Mrs Mense, "for ye see Miss Lillie has nae friend to speak o' but yoursel', and it's no like she could ken wha sewed weel, and wha didna; but I'm just as blythe as I can be, Miss Lillie, to see you wi' your light gown and your smile again, and so is Mossgray; and now I'll gang my ways, and see that Jen's minding the breakfast."

"Lilies," said Helen, when the old woman was out of hearing, "I don't need to have any foolish pride with you. I will make these things for you if you will take me for your sempstress."

"You, Helen," said Lilies, "you don't need—you don't wish—I mean—"

"I mean that we have never been rich, Lilies," said Helen, with her shifting blush, "and that now there is occasion for a little more work than usual—that is all; and you need not look so grave, unless you think I shall not make these new-fashioned things well enough to please Mrs Mense; but I am not afraid, Lilies—I think you may trust me."

"But, Helen, you have too much to do already; you cannot work always," said Lilies. "Let me speak to Mossgray—let me—"

"Hush, hush," said Helen, "you forget that we have some pride still. I have not too much to do, Lilies; people seldom have, I think, and it is no great matter when one can get through one's troubles by a little additional labour. It is no hardship; this is my kind of fighting, you know, and I can do it very well. I think you will give me your work, Lilies, and a great deal of praise when it is done. I shall please Mrs Mense. I will invent frills. I think you must trust me."

It was a slight trial to the sensitive, proud Helen; her

cheek was flushed a little, and the smile trembled on her lip, but she talked the uncomfortable feeling away, and got it over, with less pain than she could have thought. The great web of linen was committed to her hands, and while Liliās entered into her revival of happy life, calm, peaceful, and at rest, Helen went away home to the little, quiet, dull house, and to her labour, the long, hard toil to which her heart rose, as to the strenuous oar which might keep the little ship afloat.

The autumn days flushed to their brightest and began to wane. It was a gay autumn to the Fendies, and to the other youthful people of the neighbourhood through them; Halbert Graeme had quite forgiven Menie Monikie. The saucy Menie sent him cards and gloves when she became Mrs Keith, and a barbarous lump of bride-cake; but the gift, cruel as it was, did by no means disturb the equanimity of Halbert. The broken gold coin lay snug in a corner of his dressing-case; he laughed merrily to himself sometimes when his eye fell upon it, and thought with a great deal of good-humour, and scarcely any pique, how simple and foolish the boy and girl were who broke that coin in the pleasant twilight of the Aberdeenshire glen. Halbert had got over his first romance very comfortably; the youthful epidemic fell lightly on the heir of Mossgray.

He was much "out." Alick Fendie and the redoubtable Captain Hyde engrossed a great deal of Halbert's time, and his hands were full of flirtations now when he had no restraint upon him. But Halbert was not like his father; the flirtations were honest, unsophisticated amusements, and did little harm. He was born to be popular with all, but he killed nobody.

And left thus to themselves in the quiet house of Mossgray, it was a pleasant time to Liliās and her guardian. She had learned to prize the sunshine more from its temporary withdrawal, and the old man spoke to her of the wanderer far away as of an absent son. "When he comes home." Liliās remembered how that word rung in her own ear when she first saw Mossgray; she remembered how, after the life-time of wandering, the blessedness of those who dwell among their own people fell upon her; and *he* too was to come "home."

Another letter came from him in those clear September days; it was brief, like the other. He had much to tell her,

he said, but was still feeble, and must defer it until he spoke to her, face to face; and in another month he would reach Mossgray.

The news brought a strange thrill over the calm Lily. It was years now since he went to India. Their engagement had been formed when they were both very young, and she was now matured into grave womanhood. She began to fancy that she was changed; she began to wonder whether he too had grown old as she had done; and while she smiled at herself for these fancies, they sometimes agitated her a little—a very little—only just enough to keep the balance even, and prevent an overpoise of joy.

And Helen Buchanan now could only snatch a momentary glance, from the little wicket gate, of the evening sun, as he went down beyond the hill, and could not linger to watch the golden mist fade into graver purple before the breath of night. She had no leisure now for sunset walks, no time to glean and gather in to her heart the glories of the grand sky and the dimmer tints of earth, and, eating angel's bread, grow strong. Long labour through the whole bright day, labour at the sunseting, labour in the fair, dim hours beyond; it was a hard life.

"I have seen the boatmen cross the Firth, when the tawny waves were coming in like lions," said Helen, as she bent over those weary breadths of linen, "and the wind was so high that the boat could bear no sail, and the current so strong that they could scarcely row; but there was something in their work—I fancy I must call it excitement—which made it quite a different thing from safe, monotonous labour. I mind how it moved me—the dipping of the oars, which scarcely could enter the great, buoyant swell of water, the forcing forward of the boat, which did not seem to be *in* the stream at all, but *on* it; it makes one's heart beat. I thought I should rather have been with Willie Thomson then, than when the Firth was as smooth as the wan water."

"You are not so brave as you think, Helen," said her mother, smiling. "Willie Thomson would have found you a very timid passenger."

"Perhaps—if he was prosaic and understood me literally," said Helen, "but I mean one's heart rises: and in our poor little concerns, mother, I think we are in the boat, and the Firth is wild with his lion's mane, and we are at the oars. Never mind the wind—I like it now, when I am used to the

rocking—and those great, surly, bellowing waves—let us tame them, mother, it is what they were made for; and yonder is the shore!”

Mrs Buchanan shook her head. This hand-to-hand struggle with the meagre strength of poverty was new to Helen. At their best time they had very little—so little that it was almost a marvel how the good, careful mother kept the boat afloat; but then their wants bore proportion to their means, and they were as much content with their spare living as if it had been the richest;—solitary women always have inexpensive households—and never before had there been such urgent need as now. It was well and happy that the young heart rose to meet it; the elder one had old experiences—memories of being worsted in the battle—of failing heart and sinking courage, and the armed man, Want, victorious over all. She sighed and was silent when her daughter spoke; but the storm roused the strength of Helen. It was the trumpet of her natural warfare, and she bent to her oar with a stout heart; the end was attainable—they saw the shore.

“Father,” said Hope Oswald on one of those mellow September days, “Saunders Delvie is not well—will you come and see him?”

Mr Oswald hesitated a good deal; he had not much power of expression, and though he might show his sympathy practically if it was much excited, he could not manage to speak about it. In his capacity as elder, he could administer reproof with very becoming solemnity, and overawe the scorner with the grave dignity of his office; but to encourage, to soothe, to console—these were out of Mr Oswald’s way—he was shy of adventuring upon them.

“Father,” said Hope, “when Saunders heard that Peter was dead he came to you—he wanted *you* to advise him and not Mossgray; and now when there is no good word about poor Peter, will you not come and see Saunders, father? for they say he will break his heart and die.”

“People do not die of broken hearts,” said Mr Oswald, hastily.

“But I think Saunders has broken his heart even if he does not die,” said Hope, with reverence, “and I think that is harder than if God had taken him away like Peter; but, father, Robbie Caryl says that he heard Saunders at his worship on Saturday night, and he *mined* Peter. Father, Saunders mined Peter in his prayer as if he were not dead.”

Mr Oswald shook his head.

"I am afraid there is very little chance of that, Hope."

But Hope reiterated her prayer.

"Will you come with me to see Saunders, father?"

"Wait till the evening, Hope," said the banker: "I will go then."

And Hope, when the evening came, would suffer no evasion of the promise. Mr Oswald permitted himself to be led away somewhat reluctantly, for he felt the duty a very difficult and painful one.

The door of Saunders Delvie's cottage was closed when they came up, and from it issued the voice of psalms. It was earlier than the usual carefully-observed hour of worship, but Saunders and his wife were both weary and sick at heart, and they were glad to shut out the world and its gay daylight, and to seek the merciful oblivion of rest as soon as they could.

The cottage was dimly lighted by the fire, and through the window the quick eyes of Hope discerned the two well-known figures seated on either side, and mingling their old cracked, trembling voices in the psalm. It was strange music—the wife's low, murmuring, crooning tones, and the deeper voice of the old man with that shrill break in it—more pathetic than any sweeter woe of music. Old, poor, bereaved, and solitary, they omitted no night their usual "exercise"—they never forgot, with these sinking, wearied hearts and broken tones of theirs, to praise the God who chastised them.

The banker and his daughter stood without, waiting till their worship ended; the low, grave murmur of Saunders' voice as he read the chosen chapter came to them indistinctly through the gloom, and then Hope saw the two old solitary people kneel down to prayer.

They could hear what he said then—all the familiar petitions—the daily prayers in which the godly peasant, ever since he first knelt down at his own fire-side, had remembered before God his church, his country, and the authorities ordained in each—had their place first in the old man's evening supplications; and last of all, with his voice then shriller and more broken than ever, and his hard, withered, toil-worn hands convulsively strained together, there came the soul and essence of the old man's prayer,—“If he is yet within the land of the living, and the place of hope; if he is

still on praying ground;" terrible anguish of entreaty over which that "if" threw its doubt and gloom.

Mr Oswald turned away his face from the quick scrutiny of Hope; the one vehement strong man understood the other, but the banker felt himself abashed and humiliated before the intenser, sublimer, and less selfish spirit: "People do not die of broken hearts." The young ladies and the young gentlemen rarely do; but George Oswald discovered, in the stillness of his own awed soul that night, how solemn a thing a broken heart is, and how the strongest might die of that rending, or more terrible, might live.

By and by they entered. The old man was sitting in a homely elbow chair covered with blue and white checked linen. The bed which occupied one end of the room was decently curtained with the same material. The house was only a but and a ben; an outer and in inner apartment, but everything in it was very neatly arranged and clean. Poor Mrs Delvie's "redding up" was done very mechanically now; her hands went about it, while her mind was far otherwise occupied, but still the kitchen was "redd up."

She sat in another elbow chair opposite her husband. She was a sensible, kindly, good house-mother, and would have been noticeable in any other connection, but the fervent, strong, passionate old man threw his gentler wife into the shade; and even her sufferings for the lost son, whose name through all these weary months she could mention under her own roof only in her prayers, were dimmed in presence of the intense and terrible love of the father. She looked very old and tremulous as she sat there shaking in her chair, and wiping her withered cheek with her apron. Saunders also had some heavy moisture veiling the almost fierce light that burned in his eye, and the old man trembled too with the wild earnestness of his passionate appeal to God.

Mr Oswald entered with a shy inquiry after Saunders' health.

"Weel eneuch, weel eneuch—better than I deserve," said Saunders, rising with a haste which showed still more visibly how his gaunt sinewy frame shook with his emotion. The visit was greatly esteemed and felt an honour, though Saunders scarcely thought it right after concluding the day in his Master's presence, as he had just done, to enter again into intercourse with men; they shut out the outer world when they closed their cottage door reverently upon the waning day—

light, and laid the Book upon the table ; but the old man rose to offer the banker his chair.

Mr Oswald sat down upon a high stool near the table, and Hope got a low one, and drew it in to the hearth, where she could look up with those young fearless eyes, whose boldness was not intrusion, to the old man's face. The banker was embarrassed ; he desired to sympathize, but felt himself an intruder.

"I hear you have been ill, Saunders," he said.

"Na, no to ca' ill," said Saunders, clearing his voice with an effort, "I'm an auld man, and I get frail ; but I hae muckle mair than I deserve ; a hantle mair than I deserve—mair than I wad hae gien to ony ane that did evil in *my* sight."

"Oh, Saunders, man !" It was the only remonstrance his wife ever made.

"And I'm no ill," continued Saunders, with the spasmodic shrillness in his voice. "I'm strong in my bodily health, Mr Oswald, it's no that : I gaed to ye ance when my heart was turning—ye ken it's no that."

To no other man would Saunders have said so much, but he thought better of the rigid banker than he deserved. He thought him possessed of his own stern unselfish nature, without his miseries to bring out its harsher points.

"Oh, Maister Oswald," said the wife, "say something till him ! speak to the auld man ; bid him no be sae hard on himsel."

"Whisht, Marget," said the old man, labouring to steady himself, "haud your peace—it's you that disna ken. What would it become me to be but hard on mysel ? wasna I hard on ane—ane—" the spasm returned, the voice became hoarse and thick, and then broke out peremptorily shrill and high, "ane that canna ken now how I hae warstled for him, yearned for him—oh, woman, ye dinna ken !"

And the mother drew back into the darkness and hid her face ; she too had yearned and travailed—but before this agony she was still.

"And gin we win up yonder where we hae nae right to win," continued the unsteady, broken, excited voice, "and seek for him amang the blessed, and find him never—will ye say I hae nae wyte o't ? Me that avenged his sin upon him, and shut him out o' my heart wi' a vow ? The Lord mightna have saved him ; it might have pleased the Lord no to have saved him ; wha can faddom the Almighty ? but I banished

him away, I pat him out of sound and sight o' the word that saves, and isna the burden mine? Marget, I bid ye haud your peace—ye hae nae guilt o' his bluid—but for me—”

The old man's head shook with a palsied vehement motion, the wild fire shot out in gleams from under his heavy eyebrows; the hard hand with its knotted sinews distinct upon it was clenched in bitter pain.

The banker sat beside him, awed, embarrassed, incapable; the small motives—the little endeavours of his own worldly existence, shrank away ashamed and convicted of meanness in this presence. He could not act as comforter—he felt a moral inability to speak at all—to presume to intrude his own indifferent feelings, before this stern avenging wrath of Love.

And Hope sat looking up with her fearless, reverent, youthful eyes into the old man's harshly-agitated face. She laid her soft girlish hand upon those swollen veins of his.

“Saunders, I think he is not dead.”

The young face was quite clear, brave, undoubting—the girl's heart, in which the first breath of the rising woman and the sympathies of childhood still met and blended, could tread in awe, but without fear, where the worldly man dared not enter. Peter Delvie's mother threw her apron over her head and wept aloud; and after a convulsive struggle to restrain them, one or two heavy tears ran down the cheek of Saunders.

“Na, na, ye dinna ken—ye're but a bairn—he's mine, and I canna hope.”

Oh, secret, hoarded, precious hope, to which the wrung heart clung with such passionate tenacity! He could not bear that a stranger's eye should glance upon it. He whispered it never in any ear but God's. His wife, the mother of the lost, knew it not except as she heard it in his daily prayer; and he denied it. Jealous of this spark of light which still was in his heart, he denied it rather than make its presence known; and yet—the light leaped up in its socket—the precious germ quickened and moved within him. He could not resist the quivering thrill, almost of expectation, with which he heard those words—the softening tears that followed them.

“Saunders, God let the prodigal come back that his father might forgive him. I think He will let Peter come back to hear that you will be friends with him now. There was a

gentleman—Miss Maxwell knows him at Mossgray—and they sent home word that he was dead; but he was not dead—he is coming home—and I think, Saunders, that Peter did not die.”

“Is’t true—bairn, bairn, are ye sure it’s true?” cried Peter Delvie’s mother, “is he coming hame—is he living that was ca’ed dead? Wha telled ye it was true? If it happened wi’ ane it micht happen wi’ twa—and my laddie! my ain bairn!”

“It is quite true, for Helen Buchanan told me,” said Hope.

The old man trembled strangely. He held his head supported in his hands, and was silent. It was the mother who spoke now; the secret treasure of hope in the old man’s vehement breast would not bear the light.

“And she’s true and aefauld, but she’s wiser than the like o’ you,” said the mother through her tears, “I see what she meant now; but she wadna tell me this, for fear I did hope, and my hope was vain. Oh, wha kens—wha kens but the Lord? but if it happened to ane, it might happen to twa, and His mercy has nae measure. It wadna be merciful to send him to his grave wi’ his faither’s wrath upon him.”

The old man’s harsh, stern voice was broken at every word, by the convulsive sob which he could not restrain.

“Haud your peace, Marget; say ony ill o’ me; but if He slew your dearest ten times ower, dinna daur to malign the Lord.”

When they left these old, agitated, sorrowful people alone with their grief and their hope, the banker did not venture to reprove his child for her want of wisdom. His own mind was full. This youthful faith and boldness—this clear up-looking to the heavens—rash as it might be, and inconsistent with worldly prudence, was a higher wisdom than his. He felt that the girl at his side had met in her simplicity, difficulties with which he dared not measure his strength—that the grand, sublime, original emotions were fitter for the handling of the child than for the man. It made him humble and it made him proud; for the fearless girl’s voice of Hope speaking to the desolate had touched him to the heart.

“Should I not have said it, father?” said Hope, after a considerable silence. “Do you think it was wrong?”

“I cannot tell, Hope,” said the subdued strong man, “it may turn out the best and wisest thing. It may—I cannot tell, Hope—you have got beyond the regions of expediency.”

He was not able to cope with these things—he confessed it involuntarily.

“Because Helen did not tell them, father,” said Hope. “If Helen had thought it was right, she would have told them.”

“Does Helen visit them, Hope?”

Hope had forgotten for the moment the antagonism of Helen and her father.

“She goes sometimes—sometimes since poor Peter went away.”

“And what does Helen say about Saunders, Hope?”

“I don’t know, father, except that she is sorry; but I mind once what Mossgray said. Mossgray said it was a good thing that folk were able to change, and that it was very miserable that Saunders did not change till it was too late—very miserable—that was what Mossgray said; but Mossgray should have told Saunders, father, about the gentleman.”

“Mossgray is wise; we are all wiser than you are, Hope,” said the banker; “even your Helen. And that was what Mossgray said? too late—he did not change till it was too late?”

Too late—too late to keep the due honour of a wise father, too late gracefully to approve and sanction the righteous purposes of a good son. Too late! The words rang into his ear as the musical air of night swept by in its waving circles, and the moon rose in a haze mild and silvery. The gentle warmth of change was loosing the chains about his heart.

CHAPTER XII.

My heart leaps up when I behold
 A rainbow in the sky;
 So was it when my life began,
 So is it now when I am old—
 The child is father to the man,
 And I would have my days to be
 Bound each to each by natural piety.—WORDSWORTH.

THE trees stooped grandly over the wan water in all their autumn wealth of colouring, dropping now and then a fluttering, feeble leaf through the sunshine and the chill air, which already felt the breath of winter. The long, yellow tresses of the ash were already gone, the glories of the sycamore lay so thick upon the ground that you could scarcely see the damp verdure of the grass underneath for the hundredfold of russet leaves which covered it; the heavy fir obtruded its spectral branches through the thin ranks of its neighbours; the red, dry leaves were stiffening on the oak and the beech; and with the flush of the red October light not quite departed, there had risen the first pallid November day.

"No, Liliias, it is not a melancholy time to me," said Adam Graeme. "I like these changes—I like to see this calm nature harmonized to our humanity; not always bare and stern, not always in the pride of strength and sunshine, but touched with the mortal breath, putting off and putting on the mortal garments. I like the cadence these old leaves make as they pass away. There is the kindred tone in it; an analogy more minute and perfect than those we talk of in our philosophies."

But Liliias did not answer. She had other thoughts of this perpetual change. The slight, feverish red was flickering again on the cheek of the Lily of Mossgray. Softened down into her grave, calm womanhood, was she the same Lily to whom the wanderer, in yon fair far-away days, plighted his early faith? and he—how had the universal breath swayed him in its varyings? That morning she had received a hurried note from London announcing his arrival; this night they were to meet.

"It is a strange subject this," said Mossgray, with the smile of his gentle musings, "for with all my years, and with all my changes, Lillas, I smile sometimes to see how the old pertinacious self has carried its own features through all. Up there in my study, where I left Bishop Berkeley this morning, was it yesterday I manufactured bows and arrows and dreamed as I made them? So strange it is to mark how this identity runs through all, how we learn and alter, are experienced, calmed, changed, and yet are perpetually the same."

Gentle philosophies! how soothingly they fell upon the timid, anxious heart beside him.

"But sometimes the change is violent, Mossgray," said Lillas, "tearing up old habits so rudely; and sometimes the whole discipline is altered—the whole life."

She paused. The old tales of that strange eastern life crossed her memory, and she could not continue.

"I think these things only develope this obstinate identity more fully, Lillas," said Mossgray, smiling. "We come through the process after our own individual fashion, and carry the distinct self triumphantly through every change. I think we must turn back, though, and leave our philosophies if you begin to tremble. Come, we will go home."

They turned towards the house, but Lillas only trembled the more; and the old man, as he looked down upon her pale face, beheld it suddenly flush into brilliant change. She stood still, leaning on him heavily.

"Are you ill? does anything ail you, Lillas?"

"No, no; it is Hew!" said the low, joyous voice; "look, Mossgray, it is Hew!"

And the old man started violently, as he looked up at the young, strong, manlike figure leaping down that hillock, with its rude steps of knotted trees—the happy flushed cheek, the frank simplicity of joy and haste.

"It is Hew!" said Lillas, looking up at the one object which she saw.

Was it Hew Murray, in the flush of his youth and strength again?

Mossgray stepped forward hastily, and grasped the hand of the new comer in silent welcome; and then the old man turned away and left them alone.

Adam Graeme was not changed; his heart beat as strongly against his breast as it had done thirty years ago,

when he laboured and yearned for some clue to the fate of Hew Murray. Hew Murray! with what a quickening thrill of tenderness his old friend turned away from the young rejoicing face, which brought back the image of his youth.

The old man's mind was confused; he did not know what to make of this singular resemblance. "It is Hew!" Was it Hew? Was the romance of the old faithful servant in their desolate house to have a wonderful fulfilment after all? The good, pure, gentle Hew, loving God and loving man, had his Master indeed given him youth for his inheritance? Singularly struck and bewildered, and with an unconscious expectation in his mind, Adam Graeme hurried forward towards the house of Murrayshaugh.

The great saugh trees beside it had shed their slender leaves, and were waving their long arms mournfully, with here and there a feeble, yellow cluster at the end of a bough, ready to drop after their fellows into the deep, sombre burn, whose course was almost choked by the multitudes of the fallen. As Mossgray crossed the old, frail, broken, wooden bridge, he heard voices beyond the willow-trees, and saw as he drew nearer two strangers standing together. The old man's heart beat high and loud with excited and wondering anticipation as they turned towards him.

The lady was very thin and pale, and had silvery white hair smoothed over the patient, thoughtful forehead, in which time and grief had carved emphatic lines. The face was a face to be noted; serene now, it had not always been serene—but the storm had altogether passed from the evening firmament, and light was upon it pale and calm, like the luminous sky of summer nights when the sun with its warmth of colour and influence has long since gone down into the sea.

Her companion seemed about her own age; he had the strong framework of an athletic man, but it was not filled up as a strong man's form should have been. You saw, as you looked at him, that he was not strong; that sickness, or privation of the healthful, free air which now he seemed to breathe in with so much pleasure, had unstrung and weakened the hardy frame of this old man; but his hair was scarcely gray, and his eye glanced from under his broad, brown, sunburnt forehead with the hopeful, cheery light of youth. The sun had not gone down with him. Over the fair world which he looked forth upon, the rich tints of an

autumn sunset were throwing their joy abroad ; the warm light and brilliant colouring were in his heart.

They looked at each other, the two strangers and the Laird of Mossgray. They were all wondering, all uncertain, all embarrassed, for Adam Graeme had paused before them, and regardless of all formal courtesies they were gazing at each other.

"Can you tell me if this is Murrayshaugh?" said the lady, with a faltering unsteady voice.

But that would not do.

"Man, Adam, have you forgotten me?" cried Hew Murray with tears in his eyes ; and the two boys who had grown up together beside that pleasant water of Fendie were grasping each other's hands again.

There needed no other salutation. "Man, Adam!" Through their varied, troubled, far-separated course, the two sworn brothers had carried the generous boyish hearts unchanged—and simple as the lads parted, the old men met. "Man, Adam!" there never were superlative endearing words, which carried a stronger warmth of long and old affection than Hew Murray's boyish greeting, bursting from the honest, joyous, trembling lip that had not spoken it before for thirty years.

"Where have you come from—where have you been? Hew! Hew, what has become of you all this life-time?" exclaimed Adam Graeme. They were holding each other's hands—looking into each other's faces—recognizing joyfully the well-remembered youthful features in those subdued ones, over which the mist of age had fallen ; but in Hew Murray's eager grasp, and in the happy, gleaming eyes, whose lashes were so wet, the spirit of the youth was living still.

"He will tell you by and by, Adam," said the lady. "It is a long story—but have you nothing to say to me?"

And Lucy Murray held out her hands—the soft, white, gentle hands, whose kind touch Adam Graeme remembered so long ago.

"Is it you, Lucy?" said Mossgray. "Are we all real and in the flesh?—is it no dream?"

Hew Murray put his arm through his friend's—far through, as he had been used to do, when they dreamed together over the old grand poetic city on the breezy Calton.

"Give Lucy your other arm, Adam," said the familiar genial voice, "and we will tell you all our story."

Lucy with the white hair took Adam's arm.

"Have you never been away?—is it all a dream those thirty years?" cried Adam Graeme.

"Look at me again," said Lucy Murray with a smile. "No—there are things in those thirty years too precious to part with. I think you have not seen my son."

"Your son, Lucy?—is it my Lily's Hew?" asked Mossgray.

"Lucy's Hew—our representative," said Hew Murray, "was it not a strange chance, Adam—if we may speak of chances—which brought our boy and I together?"

"I am bewildered, overpowered," said Mossgray. "Do you forget, Hew, that I know nothing?—that this morning I only clung to the hope that you were living at all as to a fantastic dream—that it is thirty years since I gave up the sober expectation of finding you again?—where have you been?—why have you kept us in this suspense? How is it that we have never heard of you, Hew Murray?"

Hew Murray grasped his friend's arm tightly in his own.

"Did you ever think the fault was mine, Adam?—but who is this?"

The little old woman, the housekeeper of Murrayshaugh, came quickly round the gable of the house. They were standing in front of it—and their voices had startled her.

"Who is it?" Lucy Murray looked at her, with some anxiety. "I think it must be Isabell Brown."

Very suspiciously Eesabell returned the scrutiny. The dignified, gentle, aged lady with her serene face and silver hair brought some singular thrill of recognition to the old woman. She thought she had seen the face before.

"I thought it was only gangrel folk. If I had kent it was you, Mossgray, I wadna have disturbed you; but maybe the lady and the gentleman wad like to see the hooose."

She looked at them again with a jealous eye; the feeling was instinctive. Isabell did not know why she was suspicious of those friends of Mossgray.

"Do you not know me, Isabell?" said the graceful old lady, holding out her hand.

Isabell drew back with a slight curtesy.

"Na—there's few ladies ever came about Murrayshaugh in my time; Miss Lucy had mair maids than me—ye're maybe taking me for my sister."

"There was no one else but Jean, I think, Isabell," said

Lucy, smiling; "and Jean was not like you. She was as tall as I am, and she had red hair. We gave her blue ribbons on Hew's birthday because they suited her ruddy face—do you mind, Isabell?—and do you not know me now!"

Isabell drew further back—the old woman looked scared, suspicious, afraid.

"Na, I dinna ken ye, Madam," she repeated firmly. "I ken few fremd ladies—I haena been in the way o' them—how should I?"

Lucy smiled: it brightened her face in the calm of its peacefulness into warmer and sunnier life.

"If you do not know me, Isabell, do you know Hew?"

The old woman cast a jealous, angry look upon the sun-burnt face of Hew Murray—her tone became abrupt and peevish.

"I'm no to ken wha ye're meaning, Madam—I never saw ye before nor the gentleman neither. I've lived in Murrayshaugh a' my days, but the like o' me wasna to see a' the company; and how should I ken the gentleman?"

The sharp black eyes twinkled through a tear affectionate and angry. The old woman was afraid of these stranger people, afraid of the singularly familiar faces which she thought she had seen in a dream.

"Adam," said Hew Murray, "I think *you* must tell her who we are; or shall I, Lucy? Do you forget how you packed the Murrayshaugh apples for me, Isabell, when I went to India? and the moss you put round them in the basket? I think I have some of it still. But have you really forgotten—did you think, Adam, that any one could ever forget our sister Lucy Murray?"

Trembling and considerably excited Isabell stood on the defensive still.

"I never kent ane of the name but Miss Lucy, and this lady might be Miss Lucy's mother. Do ye think I dinna ken? Oh, Mossgray! it's no' like you to let folk make a fuil o' an auld lone woman!"

Lucy disengaged herself from Mossgray's arm.

"Come, Isabell, we will let them in. And so you remembered poor Lucy Murray and thought that time had spared her? But I am older than you. I used to have my white roses here. What has become of my roses? But I have something better to show you; my son, Isabell, my young Hew; and now come, we'll let them in."

And Lucy turned along the narrow path to Isabell's back-door; jealously, and in sullen silence, the old woman followed her.

"But, Hew, Hew, where have you been?" repeated the astonished Mossgray, as they waited for the opening of the great door.

"In India, Adam; all this time buried in the depths of India, without having any power or means of letting you know that I lived; but wait, wait till we are all together. You shall hear the whole of my story to-night."

The heavy door swung open. Lucy had opened it, and Isabell, jealous and silent, stood behind.

"Come in; come home, Hew," said Lucy Murray. "Let us enter our father's house in peace and thankfulness as we left it with sorrow."

They entered in silence, and silently the brother and sister went through the faded, dreary rooms; while the old woman followed them like a shadow.

Last of all they went into "Miss Lucy's parlour." It had no very sad associations for Hew. He remembered only the pleasant boyish evenings spent in it, the sadness of the parting, which now, so far away, was softened into a tender memory, making its scene not mournful, only dear; and Hew lifted the window and stepped happily out upon the terrace, while Lucy seated herself on the old high-backed chair at the old work-table, to ponder on the old times. To her the room was full of dim days well remembered—girlish griefs and solitudes, struggles which no one witted of—they seemed to have been dwelling here like so many pale ghosts, waiting for her coming, to remind her of their former selves.

A touch on her sleeve roused Lucy from her reverie. Isabell was looking down earnestly into her silvery, gentle face.

"Leddy—Madam," said the old woman, with a husky voice, "you didna mean you? You wasna saying that you're Miss Lucy?"

"I am Lucy Murray grown old," was the answer, "and that is my brother Hew, Isabell, whom we lost in India. Could you forget Hew? Do you not know Hew, Isabell?"

"And Murrayshaugh?" gasped the old woman.

"My father is dead; he lived until ten years ago, and when he died was a very old man, Isabell, and a gentler one than he used to be. Will you welcome me now?"

Timidly, and still a little jealous, the housekeeper consented to meet with a hasty touch the white hand of the old lady whom she feared ; and then Isabell abruptly left the room.

They remained for some time in the same position ; Lucy in her old place, thinking of the past, and Hew joyously passing from room to room, pointing out the scene of youthful games and merry-makings. Liliass and the young Hew had speedily followed Mossgray, and now a double introduction, very proudly and joyfully performed, had to take place, for Lucy presented her son to Adam Graeme, and Hew Grant bade his mother welcome her new child. The mother had been afraid somewhat of her son's early choice, and thought, as mothers will, that Liliass had but an indifferent chance of being worthy of her Hew ; and Liliass too had slightly trembled for the meeting ; but now all the formidable part of it was over, and they were already friends.

All her fears were forgotten ; it was almost too much for Mossgray's Lily. Hew did not think her changed ; he was not changed himself ; and his mother received her as her own child. Liliass felt her happiness overpower her. She went away to seek for Isabell, who had disappeared, and to realize it all for a moment alone.

Isabell was in the great dining-parlour of Murrayshaugh. She was on her knees in a corner, with her apron flung over her head, and petulant, painful sobs coming from under its cover, like the sobs of a child.

"What ails you, Isabell ?" said Liliass, stooping kindly over her.

"Oh, Miss Maxwell, what ails me ?" sobbed the old woman, whose innocent romance had perished. "She says she's Miss Lucy—and I canna deny't—I *div* ken the face ; but she's an aged woman ! She has hair whiter than the like o' me—and she says she's Miss Lucy Oh, Miss Maxwell, that I should have lived to see this day !"

CHAPTER XIII.

I ran it through, even from my boyish days
 To the very moment that he bade me tell it,
 Wherein I spoke of most disastrous chances,

* * *

Of being taken by the insolent foe
 And sold to slavery; of my redemption thence.—OTHELLO.

ADAM GRAEME and Hew Murray were sitting together in the large, low room in the Tower of Mossgray, which they both knew so well. Bishop Berkeley was still upon the table, but the visitor had no interest in the bishop; neither was he looking at the chymic tools or the instruments of science. He was casting long, loving glances into the dim corners of the room; the old fishing-rods, the superannuated bows and arrows, the ancient skates, they were all there, those worn-out tokens of the fair youth which was past.

"And now, Hew," said Mossgray, drawing one of those large, heavy, lumbering chairs to the unoccupied side of the hearth, "now, Hew, for this wonderful history. What have you been doing? where have you been?"

Mossgray placed himself in front of the cheerful, glowing fire; on the other side stood the low carved chair, turned mournfully aside as if some one had risen from it newly. Its position had never been changed; it still stood where the pale sunbeams could touch it, but it was turned away from the living fireside circle; for the old occupant could never return to Charlie's chair. Strangely pathetic sometimes are these dumb things about us—mournfully estranged and standing apart it touched the gentle heart of Adam Graeme.

Hew paused to spread his hands over the fire. It was a peat fire, and the glowing intense red and homelike fragrance warmed the very heart of the exile.

"Well, you heard I was robbed and killed, Adam," said Hew; "and so I was—as near it, at least, as one could be, who is now so blessed as to be at home. Such things, you know, are not unusual in India. I was carrying rich presents. I had not a very sufficient escort, and the chances were all rather that I should have filled a hidden grave in the de-

sert long ago, than that, even now, I should be beside you again.

"I was very severely wounded. These Affghan fellows do not play at fighting; but I was not quite dead, as you see, Adam, and I was young. The old, martial Border spirit had excited me, I suppose, for I stood on my defence desperately, until there was nothing left but the feeblest spark of life.

"Why they did not at once extinguish it I cannot tell. Perhaps they had pity on me for my youth's sake; at all events, they spared the life, and after a journey which I shudder still to recollect, we reached their head-quarters, and my long captivity began.

"Their chief was a hater of the English, stern and desperate—not by any means the usual type of man to be met with among his countrymen: less treacherous, less supple, and if not less a tyrant, at least more tyrannically wise. Liberty for his subjects he did not at all conceive of, of course, but the wild liberty of despotism was an instinct and necessity with our Rajah; he hated foreign domination with an energetic hatred, such as one could not fail to respect, even though one suffered by it.

"The Rajah fancied my services might be of use to him. You will smile when I tell you how, Adam. He thought of the De Boignys, and Skinners, and the native troops they drilled, and despotized, and inspired with the mechanical heroism of mercenary soldiers; and he believed that I could drill his wild followers for him, could teach them the unfaltering British discipline, could form them into mechanical pipe-clayed battalions like their European enemies.

"And I tried to do it, Adam, for at six-and-twenty one would not choose to die; if I had known perhaps the long probation which awaited me, I might have shrunk and desired the end at once; but this end is not naturally desired ever, I think—I should still choose to live, I believe, were I placed in the same circumstances again; and I hoped more warmly then.

"I began to be artful like themselves. I intrigued and schemed to have a share in the education of the young chief, and at last I attained my object. Ahmed, the future Rajah—the presumptive heir—I was to have the honour of teaching him my language.

"And I taught him my language, Adam; and Ahmed at

the head of his tribe speaks English, which has the fragrance of the Scottish border upon it. I used to smile when I heard him.

"We grew very good friends, my pupil and I. Heathen and stranger as Ahmed is, he was my boy, Adam, and we came to like each other—so much so—" said Hew Murray, averting his head a little, "that if I had not heard of you all at home, and only my place vacant, I scarcely think I should have cared for my new freedom."

There was a pause.

"We had but one book," said Hew, resuming, "my Bible, which I had managed to preserve with great difficulty. If I had been teaching the father instead of the son, in that glowing Eastern country, and with that Bible, I could have made a poet of him, Adam!

"But Ahmed was not the stuff to make poets of. He was cowed and humbled in his father's presence—overpowered by a force which he could not understand, and though he grew up a gentle lad—weak folk learn wiles, you know—there was the national policy, the tendency to intrigue and deceit; the defective sense of truth and honour constantly displaying themselves. I could not hedge my Affghan boy about with the higher principles, so much more noble and pure than the natural instincts which yet suit our humanity so well—and I could not give him the savage virtues of his father; but I only clung to him the more, because he perplexed and grieved me."

"A difficult matter," said Mossgray, "and how about religion, Hew?"

"Ahmed is not brave," was the answer. "He is a Mus-sulman still; the intellectual conviction is not strong enough, ever, I fancy, to break the old hereditary chains of the creed in which we are born. But Ahmed is like multitudes of those quick Indian youths in the great cities of our Eastern empire. He knows it all; the wonderful histories of the old time with their grand types and emblems, and the wonderful fulfilment they had. Did any one ever open that little volume, think you, Adam, and rise from it without a secret conviction that this was true? not my boy—not my Ahmed. The enchantment of the human life in which its Divinity is clothed charmed the mind of my pupil; for when one knows how men describe God, it quickens one's apprehension of the wonderful difference when God reveals himself.

"And my boy knows it all, Adam, yet in outward form is an unbeliever still; and other youths by the hundred in Bombay, and Madras, and Calcutta, as they tell me, are like him: knowing the extraordinary intellectual truth, and ready, if but the divine spark came, to burst the green withes that hold them, and worship the Saviour of the Gospel under His own free heaven. May it come soon! they are prepared for it, these lads—may the divine impulse come soon! I would fain know that my work has prospered, though I never see Ahmed more."

There was another interval of silence. The subject impressed them both; but Mossgray had not seen the singular state of society of which his friend spoke, and did not know how those young, quick, intelligent spirits, like the old sacrifices on the altars of the patriarchs, were unconsciously waiting for the fire from heaven, ready to be offered to the Lord.

In a short time Hew resumed:

"This imprisonment and work of mine continued all the father's lifetime. I did what I could to drill his soldiers, and I communicated the Fendie accent to his son; but my captivity was not lightened—and so we went on until that fatal affray which made Ahmed chief of the tribe. The lad liked me, I told you; he felt too, in the consciousness of his new power, the advantage of securing an alliance with those powerful English whom his father hated; and so, in compassion, he brought his wounded captives back to me.

"I knew none of them, but Hew's face struck me. He was the weakest of all, poor fellow, and some natural instinct drew me to him—and then, Adam—then, after my thirty years' entire separation from all that I held dear, fancy what my feelings were, when the stranger told me that *his* name too was Hew, and that he was Lucy Murray's son!

"It was a strange meeting;" Hew Murray wiped away the pleasant moisture which dimmed those happy eyes of his; "and Ahmed had given me my freedom. That wily, politic boy! I wonder if he was getting wearied of his old Dominie after all, or if his reluctance to part with me was real. I wish affection was as blind as they call it, Adam, for I think my eyes, being so solicitous about him, were only quickened to see his weakness; but I could not have remained. I could not have done him any service even if I had remained.

"So I gave him my Bible, Adam, and he gave me jewels

and shawls more than I knew what to do with. I was bringing them all home innocently to Lucy," said Hew, with his old frank laugh. "Lucy would have been as magnificent as a Begum had no one interfered, but we got into a mercantile atmosphere before we left India, and so some of Ahmed's pretty things were converted into coined monies. There is enough to make the old house habitable, I think; but I have come home as I went away, Adam. I always thought I should; there has no bilious fortune fallen to my share; only they have given me a pension—and better than the pension—give me your hand, Adam—I am at home."

And the two gray-haired men grasped each other's hands.

Lucy Murray had entered the room unheard. She came forward with her gentle, gliding step, and leaned over the carved back of Charlie's chair, looking at them as they sat together by the fireside.

"What are you doing, boys?" said Lucy, with the voice and the smile of her youth. Boys—the young composed grave girl, long ago, had called them by that name. They were both older than she was; but the assumed dignity of the earlier maturing woman sat gracefully on her then, as that smile did now.

"We were talking of that merchant boy of yours, and how he would not let me bring home Ahmed's jewels to his mother, Lucy," said Hew.

"I wonder Hew did not remember the bride that will soon be," said Lucy. "Adam, I like your Lily; I was a little afraid—may I tell you? a little afraid when I began to guess what the conjunction of her two names pointed to. You look grave, Adam—I should not have said so much?"

"No, Lucy," said Mossgray, "they are dead; how far we might err in our early dreams, let us not question. I forget all that is evil when I look back. Let us lay the errors of their youth beside them in the grave."

Lucy Murray bowed her head silently in acquiescence, and folding her hands over Charlie's chair, pitifully thought of the dead.

The dead who wounded hearts and had no power to heal them—who broke faith, and went away with their treachery in their hearts to the grave; who disenchanted youthful eyes and darkened lives which were not bright before—evils that the doer never can atone—alas for them, unhappy! Alas for the false—the cruel—the heart-breakers! The hearts broken

will heal; the suffering will pass away like clouds; but woe for those who inflict—woe for the seedmen of sin, whose harvest shall not fail.

"And you, Lucy," said Mossgray. "I must question you, and blame you as I cannot blame Hew. Why have I never heard from you? where have you been?"

"We came from France to Orkney," said Lucy; "was not that a change, Adam? and there I have been very glad and very sorrowful. They both lie yonder—my husband and my father, and there my Hew was born. I should have written to you, Adam, but I have told you before how long my father lived, and how he retained his old pride; and when he was dead, and James was dead, and Hew away from me, forgive me that I was very listless, very sad, Adam. I could write to no one but my son."

"Not even to Liliass; when you knew who she was, Lucy?" said Mossgray.

"Not even to Liliass, Adam. I did not know *herself*, and I had some fears, I confess, of Hew's early decision on a matter so important; and when they sent me word that my son was dead, and when I got her simple, touching letter, I was jealous, Adam, that any one should mourn for him but myself. I became selfish as grief does sometimes; I would not believe that any other heart could break as mine did. He was mine—my son. I was jealous of her, Adam, when I thought she claimed a right to share with me my boy's grave."

"And afterwards?" said Mossgray, smiling. He too seemed in a jealous mood—jealous for his ward and her new position.

"Afterwards I fell into my old indolent, listless mood again," said Lucy; "Hew was coming home—the two Hews—it filled all my mind. I went to meet them at London, promising myself that I should atone to Liliass for my neglect, and she accepts my apology. Will not you accept it, Adam? You do not know how listless and powerless one becomes whose life has been so overcast as mine. I think it will be otherwise now—I think it is all past, Adam, and we will travel to the sunset together."

CHAPTER XIV.

But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.—PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL.

"GANG in bauld, man—put on a guid face, and tak the first word o' flyting. What are ye looking sae wae about? —they'll e'en be ower blythe to welcome ye hame."

"Na, na, Robbie, I ken better," said the person whom Robbie Caryl was exhorting; a tall, thin, sunburnt young man, who limped a good deal, and looked sickly and weak. "Man, I wad rather face a file o' bagnets than face my faither and him angry; and I wad gie a' the Indies gin I had them, if he would just be friends wi' me again."

"Friends wi' ye?—ne'er a fears o' him," said the fisherman. "I'll just tell ye, Peter—if he disna be friends wi' you after a' you've gaen through, and a' he's gaen through himsel, I could maist find it in my heart to pit him in Tam Macqueen's boat the first ill day, and let him set to wi' the Firth, and try which ane'll master the tither—for he's past dealing wi' men."

"Whisht, Robbie, ye dinna ken," said the young man. "I'll hear nae mortal speak ill o' my faither; if I could but get a word o' my mother, hidelins—just to see—maybe he's mair merciful noo. He's an auld man—he's winning near heaven. Wha kens—he may be turned to mair mercy."

Their path lay along the side of the Marsh, and they had just rounded the projecting corner, on which the comfortable farmstead of Seabraes, with its barns and byres, and hay-stacks, stood, looking on the Firth, with only a swelling bank of close seaside grass between it and the beach. On this green bank, the stakes of the salmon-nets used during the summer were piled in a rude pyramid, and past it wound a byway to Fendie. They were advancing towards the gate of a field through which the road lay.

A gaunt, high figure stood leaning there, hidden by the hedge. Saunders Delvie had heard that his son lived and was returned from young Hew Grant, who last evening had

visited the cottage along with Mossgray to prepare the way for the prodigal; and now, trembling under the cold, bright November sunshine, the father stood waiting for his son.

The proud old man was glad that he had been warned—glad that he had time to compose the rigid muscles of his face, and that no man could guess how his joy boiled in his veins, and how the passionate heart beat in his breast. He was solemnly dressed in his decent Sabbath suit, and looked almost hysterically calm, though all his endeavours could not put away the look of high, suppressed excitement from his twitching eyebrows and stern-featured face.

"Faither! faither!" cried Peter Delvie, as they came suddenly upon him—the old man's efforts at calmness, and his unusual dress, carried fear to the heart of his son: poor Peter lifted his hand imploringly. "I was only a laddie—have pity on me—have pity upon me, faither!"

The grim muscles twitched, and worked about the old man's mouth; the dew hung heavy on his eyelashes.

"Come hame, lad," he said, in a voice husky with the effort which confined his welcome to those seeming indifferent words. "Come hame, lad, to your mother. What garred ye sleep under a fremd roof this last night, and your ain bed waiting on ye at hame?"

"I thought I had some skill in men," said Robbie Caryl, as he turned back to his cottage, vehemently pulling down his eyelid on pretence that some particle of the innocent wet sand had entered his eye. "I thocht I could see through maist folk, but this ane's beat me. The auld dour whig o' a man! wasna I feared to face him when the word came that the lad was dead? and was I no fleyed for him fenting like the women folk for sake o' the joy? Ne'er a bit o' him—he taks his son hame as canny as I would tak little Sandy out o' a dub. Are ye there again in the saut water, ye wee black dielie? I'll pin ye in the net amang the grilse, and sell ye up in the toun for a fat flounder, as sure as the next tide—wife! is this bairn to drown itsel, ance for a', the day?"

"I'm sure it's mair your business, Robbie, to keep the laddies out o' mischief than mine," answered Robbie's wife, who was spreading out the large stake nets on long ropes to dry, the season of fishing being now over; "but what hae ye dune wi' Peter? has he gane hame?"

"I gied him in a present to his faither," said the fisherman, lifting the little wet obstreperous Sandy upon his

shoulders, "and Saunders took him as quiet as that cuddie taks the thrissles—so a' the splore's dune, Jean, and I maun awa into the toun wi' the flounders; whaur's the creels?"

"Mr Oswald," said Saunders Delvie solemnly, looking in at the door of the banker's private room, as he passed the bank on his way home. "I hae gotten back my son; he was dead and is alive again—he was lost and is found—and I've come to offer ye my thanks, Sir, for your guid counsel. The Lord sent grief sae lang as I called His name to witness my wrath against the lad, but now, when I hae learned better, behold the mercy! I'm thankfu' to you, Maister Oswald—I'm an auld man, but I needed to learn—and I'm thankfu' aboon a' to Him that pat words o' guid counsel into your mouth, and garred my heart change—for now I'm taking Peter hame."

The banker fell back in his chair as Saunders withdrew, looking and feeling very much disconcerted; for *he* had offered no good counsel—had given no advice. The thanks which he did not deserve fell on him with the strength of just reproof. The pen fell from his fingers—the solemn joy and thanksgiving of the stern old peasant moved him almost as much as his grief had done. It touched the conscience of the obdurate father of William Oswald.

"And was you killed at the same place as the gentleman, Peter, my man?" said Peter's mother, wiping her eyes, as the first excitement of their meeting subsided. The cottage too was in very solemn order, and the house-mother had put on her Sabbath gown. There was a grave significance in these changes.

"Na—I got my wound at anither place, mother," said Peter, "and they pat me in the hospital. It was just when I came out that I heard o' the gentlemen—that they were gaun hame; sae I gaed to Mr Murray—I minded hearing aboot him being lost lang ago—and tellt him my story, and he engaged me to be his servant. His servant, mother; but I think he paid mair attention to me on the road hame than I could do to him, and said he would speak to my faither. I wish—I just wish there was onything in the world the like o' me could do—no like to make it up to him, but just to let him see that ane was thankful; but I'm come hame a puir useless object, mother; they say I'll be lame a' my days."

Poor Peter began to look disconsolate again. The idea of being a burden on those for whom he would so gladly have laboured, was very bitter to him.

"Dinna, laddie, dinna," said Saunders Delvie. "I'm strong and hale, the Lord be thanked, though I'm auld; do ye think I winna work for ye baith as blythe, ay, as blythe as the day ye were born—as blythe as I gaed out to my wark, Marget, the first time I heard the bairn greet in this house, and kent the blessing was come? Maistly blyther, woman, for I didna ken the depths then as I do now. What for do ye greet? I tell ye it behoves us to gie the Lord thanks, and no' tears, for His mercy."

But the tears were the thanks; they hung upon Saunders's own withered cheek as he reproved his wife.

"Nae doubt but we'll fend," said the mother, "nae doubt but we'll be provided for. Wha ever wanted yet that put trust where it should be put? But gang away, Saunders, like a man, and put on your ilka day's claes; I canna help it—it comes into my head ye've been at a funeral when I look at ye, and the like o' thae thochts are no' for this day."

And in this cottage and in Mossgray the joy of reünion was the same, only perhaps so much the greater here, as the passionate spirit of this old man was more intense and vehement than any other near him, greater alike in its joys and sorrows.

In Mrs Buchanan's little parlour those long November evenings were less busy now; the dreaded Martinmas came and went; the work was finished and the rent paid.

Six pounds—how small a sum it was—and yet it had swallowed up the whole half-yearly dividend, and the whole produce of their hard labours. Helen began to look discontentedly at her best gown, that long-preserved black silk one, which now that her brown merino was so far gone, must be worn every day, and for which no substitute could be obtained; and Mrs Buchanan sighed over the thin shawl as she daintily darned the places where it began to give way, and smoothed her daughter's hair tenderly, in an unconscious endeavour to console her. Mrs Buchanan comforted herself by thinking that, in spite of the old shawl and the one much-worn gown, her poor Helen looked a gentlewoman still; but the days grew chill, and other people were wearing cloaks and plaids and furs. Mrs Buchanan sighed—she could not venture to make any addition to Helen's stock, for the next half-year's rent began to lour upon her gloomily already. How was it to be met?

Helen was a good deal overcast with those cares too, but

the clouds never settled down upon her firmament ; they came and went, as the ceaseless breezes drove them hither and thither, a hundred times in a day ; and between every pang of heart-sickness, between those weary sighings for something happier, which could not choose but fall upon her sometimes, there always intervened bright glimpses of wayward sunshine, stirrings of the young uncontrollable life, the nervous strength and daring of her nature, which rose to meet the struggle when it came, and when it was not present, happily forgot it all.

It was Saturday, the first Saturday for a long time which she had not spent with Lillas. But Lillas was joyfully engrossed with the strangers, and Helen shyly kept herself apart, and felt a shadow of contrast upon her own sombre, unchanging lot ; but just as she began to sink under her natural dimness, an appearance crossed her eyes, which brought out the merry, ringing laugh, and flushed her sky with the sunshine of gay impulse. The appearance was the Reverend Robert Inches escorting a lady—a very young, very bashful, very pretty little lady, who seemed to see a good deal of fascination in the handsome head which bent down to her so graciously. If he was beginning to be cured of the more serious wound, the Reverend Robert was not cured of the mortification. The pretty little girl was a Laird's daughter, by no means disinclined to smile upon the handsome minister. He was escorting her home—the traitor, on a Saturday ! and chose this road out of the remaining anger and malice aforethought, which still testified the power of Helen, to try if he could not mortify her as she had mortified him.

There never was a more lamentable failure. Mrs Buchanan upstairs heard the ringing laugh break the silence, and then the new impulse of mirth made itself a voice. The good mother listened with a smile. Helen was moving about below. Helen was singing, and in another moment the gay voice and the light foot came upstairs, keeping time with each other in the pleasant caprice of a cheerful heart.

Mrs Buchanan was working at a particular "fancy work" of her own. She was darning the carpet. The carpet had been new once, but that was so very many years ago, that it was growing aged now, and feeble like other things. There is a pleasure in doing what one knows one can do well. Mrs Buchanan had a modest pride in her skill for repairing these dilapidations of time ; and the natural delicacy of mind which could

not be at ease while there was anything ungraceful or imperfect around it, expressed itself after this homely fashion. She did not patronize finery at all, but the aesthetical feelings were delicately developed in the good mother's mind nevertheless, and there was art in her darned carpet.

"Will you come with me, mother, to the Waterside?" said Helen.

"I must have this done: I don't want to begin to it again, my dear," said Mrs Buchanan, looking up from her work; "and besides, it is very frosty and cold, Helen; wrap yourself up as well as you can, and I will have a cup of tea for you when you come in again."

So Helen drew the shawl, which fortunately had been of very sober colours in its far-distant youth, over her merino gown, and tying on her little straw bonnet with its plain brown ribbon, went down-stairs again, and out into the clear, chill November air. It was rather cold, but bright and exhilarating, and singing snatches of old songs under her breath, Helen went happily down the steps of the bridge till she reached the river-side, far down, towards the waterfoot.

Yonder, quivering under the red, bold, frosty sun, the great Firth thrills through its full veins with the joyous impulse of life. Far away among some quiet clouds is Skiddaw and his humbler brother, vigilant, far-seeing, watching over "the English side," as it slopes down, in the serene evening atmosphere, to the brink of the great waves; and there the winding Fendie water glides into the estuary, and cold at that point looks the round hillock from which the sun has quite withdrawn, while in the west that great bluff hill which defies Skiddaw has a glory on him almost too grand to look at, and the range of far-withdrawing hills, of which he is the last and greatest, open away in the distance, with cloudy peaks ascending behind, and clear intervals of sky, like lakes, between.

The air was very quiet, the river drowsy with the frost, the last old patriarchal leaves fluttering down one by one. In shady nooks which the sun had not reached, the morning hoar frost was still white upon the grass. Calmly over the world stole the slow change, clothing the earth like a garment with all its blessed uses in it. Calm over all, the great sun went down unchanging—the wonderful heavens stood constant for ever. Strange harmony—strange contrast; the eternal yonder, stedfast in the skies—the immortal here, born

to be swayed, and taught, and changed in right of its humanity—the child of the great heavens.

The clouds were still red in the west, and from the haze of light which the sun left for a moment behind him, the dark stern hill stood boldly out. Helen was about to turn back, carrying more sadly the heart that came hither singing like a bird; for great thoughts were rising in it now, thoughts which breathe only in the graver air, and hush the voice of singing.

“Helen!”

How she started! but slowly, only very slowly, her pride permitted her to turn, to ascertain whence the voice came.

“I have been looking for you up the water,” said William Oswald, coming up with a warm eager glow upon his face; “and should have gone back again to your mother disconsolately, had I not caught a glimpse of your shawl.”

She looked at it very pleasantly; the venerable, aged friend; it was good for something in this world after all.

“And now, Helen, I have a great deal to say to you.”

Helen did not doubt it. There came upon her a slight tremour; this then was to be the final combat, hand to hand. He was resolved to conquer; she saw it in his eye, and for the first time she was afraid.

But at present William Oswald said nothing very warlike; he began to speak of his work in Edinburgh—his book; and Helen in spite of herself was interested. He told her of his prosperity; the rising good name; the modest beginning of fortune; frankly and in full confidence, as people speak to those who have a right to know, and an interest in all which concerns the speaker; and Helen turned her head away now and then half afraid of this quiet appropriation—this strange *right* by which he claimed her sympathy.

Other people had been walking that Saturday afternoon beside the wan water. Far upon the opposite side, Hope Oswald and her father were returning from Fairholm, where they had been to make a call—a business call of Mr Oswald’s, in which he had persuaded his favourite to accompany him.

“Do you know where William went, when we came out, Hope?” said the banker.

Hope looked up doubtfully in her father’s face; but she hesitated only a moment. “He went to Mrs Buchanan’s, father.”

Mr Oswald said nothing. William had only been a few hours at home, but during these had undergone a scrutiny of which he little dreamed. The banker had been prepared to find his son changed, and had prepared himself to be contemptuous; but William was not changed: and the old pertinacity began to tighten its grasp upon his father's heart.

In a quiet link of the water, not very far from Fendie, yet as still and solitary as though it were in the midst of a wilderness, lay a little mossy burying-ground. They are frequent in that Border district; melancholy, green, dewy places, sometimes clustering their tall, grey spectral grave-stones about the ruined walls of an ancient chapel, sometimes altogether deserted by the reliques of the old faith—lying alone, by roadsides and in quiet places, disturbed only when grave processions come, to add to the number of the names of those who are dwelling there.

A few fine old trees grew within the enclosure and round it; through a fringe of long bare willow branches you could see the water. Mimic forests of moss covered the trunks of the trees, and minute white fungi specked the green with delicate flower-bells. Hope Oswald had a great admiration of those lichens—she entered the graveyard to seek some specimens of them—and her father good-humouredly followed her.

The strong man's heart was softened; he was more open to kindly impressions than usual; and as he stood waiting for his favourite child, his eye fell upon a grave. Nothing had happened in his prosperous life to bring him near such solemn dwelling-places as this. He had lost no children; and the memory of father, mother, and brethren, had faded out of his heart long ago. He had never seen this humble stone before: "Sacred to the memory of Walter Buchanan;" it moved him like the dead man's voice.

With a hushed and whispering tone the river passed by upon its way, and the willows rustled on the water with a low lamenting cadence. Amid such sights and sounds as living he would have loved to hear, the gentle man lay dead; where none could ask or give forgiveness—where none could alter the unjust anger, the evil sternness, the cruel pride which was past. The heart of the rigid man began to beat and tremble, as he remembered the absolute conclusion put to all human doings by that grave. A little time the glad vicissitudes of change should remain for himself—and then—

What life soever he had darkened—what truth dishonoured—what mercy neglected—absolute and stern, the coming death should fix them all unchangeable for ever.

He was a Christian man, despite of all the weakness which lay in his boasted strength. He felt that the secrets of his own heart lay bare before the Eye which judged the dead. Wonderingly Hope Oswald looked into her father's awed and changing face. She dared not venture to say, "This is poor Mr Buchanan's grave," as, with simple art, she had intended, when she first observed it; and in silence he took her hand and led her away.

His stronghold was broken down—his worldly wisdom failed him. He had deliberated on all his actions all his life—should he obey the impulse now?

"Hope," said the subdued banker, "why did you speak of Mr Grant that evening we went to see Saunders Delfie? Do you remember? Why did you say to them that you thought Peter was alive?"

The sensible Hope was perplexed.

"I—I don't know, father," she said, with some hesitation. "I just said it because it came into my head."

And the prudent, deliberate, elderly banker felt himself constrained to copy his child.

"Go home now, Hope," said Mr Oswald, as they reached the bridge. "I have something to do; tell your mother I shall not be long." And Mr Oswald hurried away to say what had come into his head. The obstinate man felt that it was right, and that he dared not trust himself to consider. Very grand and successful had been Hope's experiment—her father determined to try one of his own.

William Oswald had indeed a great deal to say. They lingered on their walk, Helen and he, till the dusk stole over the sky, blotting out the sunny clouds in the west. He was a good general, this grave resolute William; he skirmished with his restless suspicious adversary, till he got her into the most favourable position for his decisive movement, and then he struck the blow.

But her usual bravery had forsaken Helen; against the strong will which took possession of her now, she could not bring up the buoyant might of resistance which was so available in her usual struggles. She tried it faintly, but the proud heart would only flutter, it would not rise to the warfare; and so poor Helen perforce had to listen, and at the critical

point of the listening, instead of keeping up the combat as she had hitherto done, could only, by some strange imbecility which she by no means comprehended, say something which ended in "your father."

The moment the words were said, the heart did rise in indignation at its own treachery; but they *were* said, and she was compelled to listen again.

"I have not spoken to my father yet," said William, "but he thinks I have given up this matter, Helen, and he thinks he is very much satisfied."

He had done it now—the enchantment began to relax—the eager heart sprang up in awakened strength, again resolute not to be conquered.

"He thinks I have forgotten," pursued the imperturbable William, "and he thinks he is satisfied; but at the same time, Helen, he thinks I am a very pitiful fellow, and that there is no one like you in all Scotland."

They were close to the gate of Mrs Buchanan's little house. The weaker belligerent visibly started—not at the singular speech alone, but at a sight more singular; for there with his hand upon the wicket gate, awkwardly fumbling about the latch, and looking as shy as ever girl looked, stood the banker Oswald.

He was just parting with Mrs Buchanan; but Mrs Buchanan's impetuous daughter had reached the gate before he could open it. The stern banker was very much confused; he looked up awkwardly at the unquiet face with its strange, perplexed wonder—its singular mixture of emotions—pride, anger, pleasure, even—alas, for Helen's dignity—a little fun; for the confusion of the respectable Mr Oswald had something ludicrous in it.

No one would help him; he appealed to William with a glance, but the uncompassionating William looked on with secret glee, and offered no assistance. Mr Oswald was very much confused. He wanted to say something to the purpose, but could not accomplish it; so he said something which was not to the purpose.

"A cold evening, Miss Buchanan."

Miss Buchanan's expectant face was turned full upon him. Her rapid lip moved unconsciously as he said the unmeaning words. She bowed her shy graceful bow, and passed him with the swift nervous motion which belonged exclusively to herself. The banker looked a little blank; he

did want to say something, and he was annoyed that he had failed.

"Helen, my dear—Helen," said the good mother, with a slight tone of reproof. Helen paused and turned round within the gate; the slight impatient motion—the embarrassed frank look—Mr Oswald was pleased that like himself Helen did not know what to say.

"I came to say," said the banker slowly, "that my wife intended—I mean wished, to call to-morrow if your mother would permit her, and that we—that is, I hope we shall see more of each other in future, Miss Buchanan—good night."

He held out his hand—shyly the small nervous fingers met it. The banker looked dubiously in her face; was it to be peace? but she only said good night—and Mr Oswald turned away with a doubtful, pleased smile, too much occupied to notice his son till he stumbled against him, and then suffered the glad silent grasp of William's hand, in token of full and happy reconciliation.

In the little parlour, the tea-tray was on the table, the fire shining brightly, the light—though there was still but one candle—cheerfully filling the homelike room; but Helen ran upstairs and laughed a little, and shed a few bright tears, and came down exceedingly dignified and proper, endeavouring to persuade herself that she was angry, but certainly shedding no angry radiance round her, out of her shining eyes.

The old kind face in the old corner; the pleasant, familiar, son's voice discoursing of old household things which no one else knew as he did. Mrs Buchanan wondered at herself how she could ever tolerate another—could ever dream that any but he might be the future son.

CHAPTER XV.

Joy, gentle friends! joy, and fresh days of love
Accompany your hearts!—MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

"Is it to be, Helen?" asked Lilius.

A sudden gravity floated over the lurking laughter in Helen's eye.

"Is what to be, Liliass?"

The Lily of Mossgray was almost gay now. She put her hands on her friend's shoulders, and looked with a smile into her face.

"Because Mossgray particularly desires to know. He will ask you the question himself if you do not tell me, Helen."

Helen drew away the gentle hands.

"You have told me very little about your new mother, Liliass. Is she indeed the Miss Lucy of Murrayshaugh—Isabell Brown's young lady?"

"My new mother wants to see you, Helen; you must come with me to Mossgray to-day; and Isabell at Murrayshaugh begins to be reconciled to Miss Lucy. She was cured of her unbelief," said Liliass, with a happy blush and smile, "when she saw Hew."

"Is he so like what his uncle was?" said Helen.

"He is very like the picture, and the picture was like his uncle—there is a resemblance still."

"And, Liliass—for yourself," said Helen; "do you stay at home—do you remain here?"

The calm Liliass answered less shyly than her friend asked, though both of them blushed. "We are going out to the wars again—not to India; I do not mean to India—but Hew must go and work, Helen; for all these changes do not make us rich, and Mossgray tells him it is best to climb the brae and conquer the difficulties with his own hand."

The flush deepened on Helen's cheek—the brave stout heart rose; for her too this work remained; and the notes of the reveillé were already in her ear.

"You guessed well once, Helen," said Liliass, "when you prophesied calm griefs for me; but now that the terror and the pain are overpast—now, Helen—what do you promise me now?"

"Good times," said the young prophet, raising her stooping head, "fair calm sunshine, pleasant skies—and so many to help and comfort you, Liliass; sometimes sorrows—quiet ones—righteous people going away hopefully to the other country—but not war; for you will dwell among your own people."

"Not always," said Liliass, with her quiet smile; "not at first certainly; and for you, Helen?"

"For me!"

She looked away into the vacant air, her eyes absorbed with fairy visions; not of ease or wealth, or rank—those things so far away and unknown in which she saw no charm; but the loud heart beat high in her breast, and the colour went and came on her cheek, like the rapid breath which seemed to sway it; the hill to climb, the dangers to conquer!

With a sudden start she broke the spell of her musing:

“He'll hae misfortunes great and sma',
But aye a heart aboon them a',”

she said half aloud, and tears bright and pleasant were in her eyes.

This was the lot which she saw rising in its unknown glory before her, the undiscovered country full of grand perils and deliverances—the storms to be borne, the griefs, the joys—the labours. The bright calm which suited her friend was not made for her; it was she who was going to the wars.

“And am I to have a lilac satin frock, Mamma?” demanded Hope Oswald.

Mrs Oswald had just returned from the promised visit which completed the reconciliation. There was something painful in it, and in the renewal of the old friendship which had been so long and forcibly restrained. Few people, even though they are happy people, can look back upon the past without sadness, and grave thoughts were in the mind of the banker's gentle wife.

“You will get whatever is proper, Hope, my dear,” said Mrs Oswald.

But Hope was very far from satisfied. “Whatever was proper” might not include the lilac satin frock, on which Hope had set her heart; so she left her mother, who was singularly silent and preoccupied, to discourse to the banker upon the marriage of Mrs Fendie's eldest daughter, the Reverend Mrs Heavileigh, and the dress in which Adelaide made her public appearance as bridesmaid on that solemn occasion. Mr Oswald was more propitious than his wife.

“You shall have your lilac satin frock, Hope,” said the banker, joyously rubbing his hands, “and anything else you like, for there's not a Fendie of them all like either of you. You shall have your frock; and do you want anything else, Hope?”

It was a considerable trial to Hope's self-control. There were, indeed, various other things which she should have liked; for instance, Adelaide Fendie had just got a pair of resplendent bracelets; but Hope restrained herself.

"Thank you, father, no—unless *you* wanted me to get something else."

The banker laughed, and made a private memorandum. Hope's modest subjection to the paternal wishes did her no harm.

But the times were by no means ripe for the appearance of Hope's magnificent official dress. She had to console herself with expectations and wait.

The new year came and passed with its festivities. The strangers settled down in Murrayshaugh; already the old rooms there had grown less dreary, more home-like—but the jealous Isabell, who suspiciously watched every new article of furniture introduced into them, had not much reason to complain. Nothing out of place disturbed the aspect of those familiar rooms. The old state parlour, which had never been used within the memory of man, was to be refurnished, to do honour to "the young folk;" but the son and daughter of Murrayshaugh were content with their old apartments. A little less meagre than they were, the antique, grave sombre rooms were little changed.

And when again the spring began to be spoken of by the softening breeze, preparations were made at Murrayshaugh and Mossgray, and under the roof of the banker Oswald. The young Hew Grant had been in Liverpool, where his business was. He was now coming home, and home too came William Oswald, who had taken a house in Edinburgh, and had been furnishing it, after the modest fashion which suited his means, with great enjoyment of the unusual business.

There had been a farewell party in Helen Buchanan's school-room—a very large party, comprising the various ranks of girls, who had finished, or had not finished, their education under her. Some of them were sturdy young women, only a few months younger than Helen's own strangely differing self—some of them very little merry fairies, not reaching her knee, but all undoubtedly owned her sway, and recognised in this enchanted circle no authority so high as "the Mistress." Hope Oswald was Helen's aide-de-camp, and assisted on this as on other occasions, and enjoyed the

party greatly; and when the host of ruddy visitors were gone, Helen Buchanan left the school-room, with grave thoughts and a dim face, not to enter it again.

"I have got my lilac satin frock, Helen," said Hope sedately, the next morning, as she hung over Helen's work-table.

Helen did not answer. She smiled—a momentary smile fading immediately into gravity. She herself was making a dress of white muslin, which was nearly finished; a very simple dress—the last proud assertion of Helen's independence.

The banker was greatly inclined to make a favourite of her now; he was proud of the new daughter who, having conquered and fascinated himself, was certain, as he felt, to subjugate all the world. There were strange contradictions in this obstinate rigid man. His son and his son's fame did not affect him at all in the same way as these two girls did. Helen and Hope—Mr Oswald fancied there were not two like them in Scotland.

And about Helen's bridal dress; a very fine one lay in Mrs Oswald's room, waiting until after the momentous ceremony, because the proud Helen would not accept it now. The banker cast a wondering half-disconsolate glance sometimes at its glossy uncut breadths, and thought it would have been a very appropriate bridal dress, and as much richer than Charlotte Fendie's as the bride was more graceful; but here, in the little parlour, sat Helen, making the plain, white muslin one which her own means could reach.

"Will you let me help you, Helen?" said Hope.

"No," answered Helen quickly, "it is nearly finished now—I do not need help—but who is that coming in?"

"Oh, Helen, it's Miss Insches!" exclaimed Hope, struck with momentary alarm. She almost feared the minister was about to rush in, and carry off the prize after all.

Helen laid her work away, and took some other less likely to excite attention. The minister's little good-humoured sister came bustling in.

"I hardly expect to be long in Fendie now, Mrs Buchanan," said Miss Insches, significantly.

But Helen's mother was resolved not to be curious—she only said "Indeed."

"Ye see," said Miss Insches, "it's no to be expected but what a young man like Robert should think of settling;

though I aye tell him it's his best way to take his time and look weel about him, for a minister's wife, ye ken, Mrs Buchanan, is no like a common body's; and when a lad like Robert is well likit in a place, he has great reason to be canny—for a wife that wasna just richt, would spoil a'."

Mrs Buchanan looked a little piqued—but Helen's face was lighted up, and she was inclined to be very merry.

"You are quite right, Miss Insches," said Helen.

The good little woman looked at her in some surprise, but Helen's eyes were cast down, and she could not see the laughter which danced under their lids.

"Ay, Miss Buchanan, it's a serious thing," resumed Miss Insches, "for ye see, a minister maunna think about his ain comfort it's lane, but about what a'boddy'll say; for it's a wonderful thing to me, how a'boddy *does* aye find something to say, whatever folk do; and then forbye being a *lady*—and I aye make a point o' that—there's so much needed in a minister's wife. There's Robert now—he's as guid a lad as ever was; but when he's at his studies, or when he's dune out wi' preaching, I'm aye as quiet as poussie—but it's no every wife that would have that discrimination."

"No indeed," echoed the mischievous Helen.

"And then Robert, puir man, he's aye been used to have his ain way," said Miss Insches, becoming disconsolate as the thought again entered her mind that Robert must consent to come down from his shrine, and very probably should have his own way no longer: "and I'm sure I dinna ken onybody that deserves't as weel; for a better lad—"

"Is Mr Insches going to be married?" interrupted Hope.

Miss Insches brightened.

"Weel, I'll no say—there *is* a young lady, I ken—she's very bonnie, though she's but a young thing, and they have an unco wark with one another. Ye ken he maun make up his mind for himsel—I wouldna take it upon me to advise him to the like o' that; but I judge he would get na discouragement yonder, and she's a lady baith by the faither's side and the mother's. There's nae saying what may come to pass in a while; but the noo, Robert's gaun away to take a jaunt to himsel—he's just worn out aye at his duty, puir man, and he's gaun to London."

"Weel," added Miss Insches to herself, as she left Mrs Buchanan's door, "if she ever got the offer of our Robert—maybe she didna—but if she ever did, I kenna what

glamour was in the lassie's e'en, to make her take that muckle dour man when she might have gotten the minister!"

A little mirth, somewhat strange to look upon, was in Mrs Buchanan's parlour when the minister's sister left; for Helen laughed, and her laugh had a quivering sound, and tears were in her eyes; and Hope laughed because Helen did, and in triumph, with some perception that there were deeper feelings than mirth in those tears, and Mrs Buchanan smoothed her slightly ruffled brow, and smiled with them, thinking of the time when "Robert" was great and important in her eyes, as well as in those of his sister, as of a troublous, uneasy time, already far away and hidden in the past.

The white dress was completed: they laid its spotless folds on the old sofa where the spring sunshine fell on it gently, and Hope Oswald laid two or three of those small fragrant, deep-blue violets which grew at the door, upon the bridal dress. Pure, simple, hopeful, marking the conclusion of the chequered youth, which, spent in toil and poverty, had yet been bright with the sunshine of heaven. Tenderly Hope Oswald decked it with her violets—gravely the mother looked on; this gentle grasp of joy brought a strange note of sadness out of the young heart and the old, sadness which made them more joyful, and showed that the happiness had reached the depths, and stirred the stillest waters there.

And in her little room alone, Helen Buchanan paused at this new starting-point of life, to look upon its mercies which were past, its difficulties which were before her: and with tears upon her cheek, rendered the thanks and sought the strength which she owed and needed. A new beginning: to be loftier, purer, braver than it had ever been; and upon the great Ideal which she sought to reach, the light streamed full down from the skies. For it was not an ideal, but a resemblance; the human features of that wondrous Man, who has carried our nature to the throne of Heaven, and wears his universal crown upon a human brow.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Now draws he to the west, and noble clouds
Near to his royal person all the day
Attend him to his chamber. In his eye,
His broad, full, fearless eye, no faint or chill
Is visible; grandly and solemnly,
As who hath well done work which shall remain,
He marches to his rest.
Lift up thy gorgeous curtains, thou great sky!
That he may enter in. Fall back, O clouds!
Where now he goeth, he must go alone."

"I DID not think," wrote Adam Graeme, as he took up the narrative he had concluded long ago, "that I should ever add more to this record; but strange things have happened with me, since in this quiet study of mine I recorded my resolutions here. My resolutions! I find no trace of them anywhere, except on this page which already begins to grow yellow, and fade into the guise of old age like its human neighbours. They are gone, like the winter ice into the bosom of our wan water, pleasantly melted under the sunshine, into the stream which gave them birth.

"For yonder, with the light mercifully shining on it, stands Charlie's chair; and beside me on this table are the first lilies of May, with dew upon their snowy leaves. They remind me of my child; not of the dead only, who long ago trod down the early blossoms of my life into the dust, but of the living Liliast, who is mine, not to be lost to me by any change. She has gone away from my old house now, with her bridegroom, but she is still my child. They blend together in my mind, the mother and the daughter, and in memory and in presence they cling to me, where neither jealousy nor fear can interpose, always my own.

"And through the open turret window yonder, I hear the sound of a frank, bold voice; my heir, the manful and stout representative of the old Graemes. He is not like me, and it is well; his honest, joyous, youthful strength will raise up the decaying race. I cannot give my thoughts to Halbert—I cannot bequeath to him my old faculty of dreams—nor would I if I could. Some one, whom I know not, will inherit from me this contemplative life. I would not give it, if I had the power with all its sadnesses and glooms, to Halbert:

he has the lands, the old honour, the good name. I am glad that I leave them to him pure, and that he is true and honest, and has not the spirit of his father. His father—who can tell? the greater mysteries of truth might open to him dying, who, living, heeded them not; but we do not speak of Charlie Graeme. Humbly in awe and silence we leave him in the great Hand which has taken him away; ourselves having pity on the dead.

“For Hew and Lucy are with me again, gray-haired people in their father’s house; and Lucy’s son and my Lilius are our common hope. The three of us have had diverse lots, parted in far distant places, exposed to strange fortunes; but we end as we began, with kindred aims and kindred fancies, and travel together towards the one conclusion of mortal life, which is the same to all.

“Hew’s troubles have been those of captivity and exile. To his warm heart, which always has answered so tenderly to voices of kindred and friendship, a very hard and bitter form of the inevitable discipline; but he has borne it bravely, and the frank, simple, guileless spirit has come unaltered through all. When we wander together by our Waterside, when I feel Hew’s arm diving through mine as it used to do thirty years ago, when I hear his unchanged voice addressing me, “Man, Adam!” I close my eyes and thank God. We are young again; the intervening time floats on the air about us, a dream which we have dreamed together, and the enthusiast lads who leaned over yonder wall upon the dim hill-side, looking out dreamily over the royal city, are here, on the banks of the home river, as hopeful, as undoubting, and scarcely wiser than when they parted.

“Heavy wisdoms that come with years, dark experiences that close men’s hearts, let us be thankful that they have not fallen on us—that we are as we were; carrying young hearts with us, into the purer country.

“Lucy has had sorrows other than these. Long patience, the silent burden of slow years and quietness such as only women bear; tending the weakness of the stern old man who lived so long in his solitary pride, and after some year or two of tranquil gladness—no longer, I think—weeping the tears of a widow. We reverence her calmer peace, as we revered her youthful gravity long ago, when we were boys, and when the budding woman called us so, and was gentle to us in her young wisdom. It is true her hair is white as

the leaves of my lilies, and that her cheek is colourless, and has something of the ashy hue of age ; but Lucy, like Hew, is unchanged. Graver, wiser, more serious still than we are, smiling the old gentle composed smile at our boyish fancies, speaking the old words of quiet counsel, directing us in the old calm playful fashion. Isabel at Murrayshaugh, simple, kind heart, wept for the broken romance, the fair, lost Miss Lucy : but I, who knew her better than Isabel, cannot think thus, for she is still Lucy Murray, the same as she ever was.

"It is some time since we married our children. He is a good youth this Hew of ours, worthy of his mother and of my Lily. My good Lily ! I miss her, now that she has left me, perhaps more than if all her time of dwelling here had been happy. I remember the long sad days in which my poor child parted with all her hopes, almost with regret. It seems to me sometimes that there was a blessing in this grief.

"I had fainted unless I had believed to see the 'goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.' Great hope and glorious, which speaks of another country—grand as it is, it does not fill up all the requirements of this humanity. To live, we must have some hope for the mortal life, some expectation warm with the human blood. It is only men who divorce and separate the two—the wonderful grace of Heaven gives us both.

"They are to come to us when the autumn comes, and it is coming apace. I agree with them that it is right—that Hew while he is young is doing well to work what work he can, and provide for days of home-dwelling ; but I feel that the absence of Lilius makes a great void, and I may innocently wish that this needful work was done, and that we might keep them here beside us.

"The other youthful people have begun their course pleasantly ; fair fall this sunny power of change : I felt that Mr Oswald's resolution must come to an untimely end, like mine, and it is very well that he has yielded gracefully, before it was too late

"The changed and the unchanged, how they blend and mingle. We are here again, we three, in these old houses, by this wan water ; scarcely a tree has fallen, scarcely an acre of those far-spreading banks has been altered, since we were here in our youth, and in our youth our most cherished fancy was to return and meet thus again. Thus, nay, not thus ;

other dreams were in each heart of us. We thought of others joining us here, in the time of which we smiled to speak, when we should be old. We thought of prosperous lives, of names grown famous, of households and of heirs ; but one by one, the old hopes have gone down to the grave of such, and only the oldest of all survives. We are here, we are together, but not as we dreamed.

"Solitary, aged people, alone but not sad ; for now we speak of One, of whom then we spoke not ever, of Him who has been with us through all this length of way, the One known when all were strangers, the One present when all forsook us. We speak of Him in His tenderness so near to us, a man touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and we speak of Him in awe and love, as God over all, blessed for ever. A little time and we shall enter His presence, hopeful to be like Him, seeing Him as He is ; and while we remain in this fair earthly country, we speak of the heavenly which is to come. Another country—perhaps indeed this familiar world with its change and fiery ordeal past ; and again I say I love to think it will be so. I love to anticipate the time when I may watch and wait *yonder* for that sublime morning which shall restore to me my human frame, my human dwelling-place ; and when I look upon this water, my faithful, long companion, I think I see it flowing on under the sunshine of a grand and holy prime, for which these ages of tumult and anguish and misery have but ripened and prepared this world.

"And while we remain here, human gladnesses abound about us, and hold us fast in their silken chains. We are much together ; we live abroad under the free heaven, my brother Hew and I, and in the evening we call out Lucy to see the sun go down.

"Bravely going down in light and hope to the other world which waits for him ; and thus we travel in peace and happily, on towards the west which comes nearer every day—on to the setting sun !"

THE END.

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